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NOEL

There is a little town
In the heart of France
Where the people are
So kind and so true
That the angels of heaven
Have made it their home

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

LITTLE BROTHER
ROUND THE CORNER
THREE PRETTY MEN
THE STUCCO HOUSE
TIME AND ETERNITY
ANNETTE AND BENNETT

PETER HOMUNCULUS
OLD MOLE
YOUNG EARNEST
MENDEL
MUMMERY
PINK ROSES

PUGS AND PEACOCKS
SEMBAL
THE HOUSE OF PROPHECY

SAMUEL BUTLER: A Critical Study
SATIRE
WINDMILLS
THE JOY OF THE THEATRE
FREEDOM
THE ANATOMY OF SOCIETY
THE RELEASE OF THE SOUL

FOUR PLAYS
EVERYBODY'S HUSBAND

TRANSLATION

JEAN CHRISTOPHE. By Romain Rolland

NOEL

AN EPIC IN SEVEN CANTOS
BY GILBERT CANNAN

LONDON
MARTIN SECKER
MCMXXII

This edition is limited to Five hundred
copies, each signed by the Author.

Silvestre Canaan

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INTRODUCTORY

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I

WHAT purpose has the singer in a land
When he must dwell with men who cannot hear,
And would not if they could, but in their bland
Self-righteousness assume that their own fear
Is Heaven's law, and will not understand
That life is more than Bibles, bounce and beer?
The singer has no purpose, yet he goes
Making sweet music among music's foes.

April in England! April in the woods!
Earth has no beauty half so rare as this.
O the enchantment! Here the spirit broods.
Here, half aswoon, young lovers find their kiss
Melt into pain, and, dreading their own moods,
They think the world and they are made amiss.
O! English lads and maids in their own spite
Turn with their love the spring to winter's night.

Call then the blackbird, call the willow-wren,
Call the bright robin, chiff-chaff, bullfinch, tit,
All singing birds to waken senseless men,
Dullards of England, dense and slow of wit.
Beasts and the trees have heard the call again,
But men are still impervious to it.
Look in their eyes. There is no wonder found.
Were they not better laid beneath the ground?

Toll the church bell and dig a goodly grave,
 Bid the wren sing his noble little dirge.
 Robin shall have a feast of worms, the brave
 Red bird has earned it, through the winter's scourge
 Staying with men. Might his example save
 The English lover in his Sunday serge
 Who drags his frosted love through April weather,
 He and his mumchance maid congealed together.

Love is laid in the grave and April passes,
 When all else blooms, intolerably rich,
 Flowers in gardens, in hedgerows masses
 Of blossom, scented, every twig and switch
 Nodding over flowers, over shining grasses,
 All is aglow in field and wood and ditch ;
 Only English love in such a wealth of living
 Lives not at all and life is unforgiving.

Cuckoo still calls to mock the English lover,
 And sounds a warning note. Such wooing leads
 To a tragic dullness, thistles in clover
 For English husband. Heart of woman bleeds
 In her baffled fury when the best is over
 And she knows him blind to all her savage needs.
 Cuckoo, call on ! Nor you nor me they'll hear ;
 They choose to die and perish of their fear.

In England love is dead. No spirit stirs
 In English hearts when all the earth's aflame
 With beauty, for their cowardice prefers
 To run from change and have each day the same,
 All seasons like ; no matter what occurs,
 To be esteemed, as though life were a game
 That men and women play to win applause,
 Itself enough with neither aim nor cause.

A household crippled by excessive rent,
 A husband who comes home to snarl or snore,
 A wife who starves herself that he his bent
 For eating, drinking, betting, may explore,
 And children may have boots, and money lent
 May be repaid with interest, and more,
 To pay for goods bought on the hire system,
 Another dodge to grind the poor and twist 'em.

Or, if the couple are beyond the reach
 Of tricks to squeeze the humble, poor and needy,
 When their immunity and luck should teach
 Them sense, they lose their virtue and are greedy,
 And full of envy when they see the breach
 Between Mayfair and Putney. They feel seedy
 When their neighbours own a more expensive car.
 They are ashamed of being what they are.

They built their towns because they could not bear
 To dwell dishonoured by their empty hearts
 Amid earth's shining beauty, and the air,
 The free, keen air, they could not breathe. Black arts
 They brewed to poison the sweet air and there
 In places fouled they set their noisy marts,
 Where pimps and whores and frauds in daily meeting
 Could taste their sole surviving joy in cheating.

That joy remains, since something must remain
 Of human nature, else the race would dwindle.
 There must be zest to stop the horrid drain
 Of life through their negation and to kindle
 A spark from the desire they have slain.
 They will not live to love but live to swindle.
 For generations they have sought no better
 Than to ignore the spirit for the letter.

The letter says that Britons never shall
 Be slaves, and therefore Britons are—(no matter
 What they seem)—free men. *Honi soit qui mal
 Y pense.* Their freedom's mixed with no such chatter
 As was set going by the French cabal
 Who brought in Liberty with such a clatter.
 The English buy their freedom with much gold
 Or, lacking it, are slaves till they are old.

They have forgotten the Apostle Paul ;
 With his one saying worth remembering :
 "I was born free." If they are free at all,
 It is by being rich enough to fling
 Discretion to the winds that they may fall
 Into the pit of their lust's fashioning.
 O! they are free to make the swift descent
 Into the sloth that stifles discontent.

They will be honoured by their eight-hour slaves,
 Honoured and envied and extolled by Smiles.
 It is for this that Britain rules the waves,
 That rogues may freely profit by their wiles,
 That churches may be built by holy knaves,
 That sordid streets may run for miles and miles,
 With no relief save the repulsive pubs
 That poor men must frequent in lieu of clubs.

And Britain rules the waves that once a week
 The working man may pawn his Sunday suit,
 That men at Westminster may rise and speak
 Not what they think but what they think their mute
 Constituents will swallow ; that the meek
 May toil to see the rich destroy the fruit
 Of all their labours ; that the Sunday papers
 May advertise and puff the money-scrappers.

And Britain rules the waves that millionaires
 May sell more soap and cocoa, margarine,
 And tea and pills, lung tonic, tables, chairs,
 Boots, urinals and motors, gelatine,
 Old bones and soda ; that skilful Bulls and Bears
 May rig a market ; that obscure, unseen,
 But well-within-the-law manipulators
 May fleece the public to tip German waiters.

Great Britain rules the waves that novelists
 May advertise themselves by praising tonic ;
 That thousands throng to honour pugilists
 While concert rooms are empty ; that Slavonic
 Jews and Germans may fill the Honours Lists
 For subsidising Shakespeare ; that the chronic
 State of art should be slow strangulation
 Lest it should break the slumbers of the nation.

For truly England is the isle of sleep.
 What you shall see there is not life but dreams,
 Such dreams as children have, with nothing deep
 To puzzle waking hours. Naught is, but seems
 To be and then is not. There is no leap
 To consciousness. The mad race sleeps and teems
 With fantasy, cracked thoughts and twisted passions,
 And knows no law save self-help and the fashions.

Now come with me and, while the warring youth
 Of every land in labyrinthine ditches
 Face sudden death, we'll try to face the truth,
 Heroic task, and yet to save nine stitches
 We'll sew our one in time and know no ruth.
 If need be, we will sit right through our breeches
 Until we've told our modern island story,
 And disengaged its humbug from its glory.

But first of all, to silence jeer and flout,
 We'll have it clear that we are patriotic,
 True-blue, fair-haired, and British without a doubt,
 Hating the sight of anything despotic,
 And loving freedom so that we look out
 For any menace to it as exotic
 Here in England. That said, without excitement
 We can proceed to draw up our indictment.

There was a time, last year (so long ago
 It almost never was), when all was well,
 Or so they told us, those who ought to know.
 England was sound, as sound as any bell,
 The nation sound and free from top to toe,
 Except for Ulster when, old men still tell,
 There was a kind of small pasteboard revolt
 In which an Irish lawyer shot his bolt.

He shot it, as you'll see, to some effect.
 But let us first in raptured contemplation
 Gaze on those times so happy, circumspect
 And truly democratic, when the nation
 Was governed for its good by the elect
 Of franchised males, to the exasperation
 Of some unreasoned females. Let us think
 And wonder, for it baffles pen and ink.

There should be monuments of precious stone
 To honour those great days, and temples, spires,
 Domes, pavilions, gardens sweetly grown
 With stately scented flowers. There should be choirs
 In palaces and gardens to intone
 And chant the praise of famous men, esquires
 Knighted, knights ennobled, as good Liberals
 Or Tories honoured by their King and pals.

Those times should never die. They never will.
 Historic names were made in those brave days,
 Names that in England shall be spoken still
 When men of smaller times have shed their bays
 Or laurels or oak leaves or what you will,
 And we've forgotten even Shakespeare's plays.
 Such names as Lyons hide so rare a mystery
 As to o'ershadow even English history.

O Muse! Thou once didst hear the prayer of Milton
 Invoking thee to hymn the fall of man
 From Paradise. We had regained and built on
 Paradise a Heaven from which to scan
 The corners of the earth, and like a Wilton
 Carpet (red) we unrolled the English plan
 For English feet to tread on. English credit
 Ne'er touched a place unless it cupped or bled it.

O Muse! With what premeditated art
 Must I unfold the beauties of that Heaven
 Watered by Thames! With what a fainting heart
 I mix my dough and wait upon thy heaven!
 Waiting on thee I needs must stand apart
 And seem like Judas barred by the eleven.
 Without thine aid I shall but write cold reason,
 Which is confounded with its rhyme-mate treason.

How to begin? The Press? The House? The Stage?
 The fabled glories of old Leicester Square
 Flanked by ancestral halls? No, let this page
 Contain of all my beauties the most fair.
 Let it be given to the modern mage,
 The seer, the prophet, the beyond-compare,
 Most downright, upright writer of those days—
 To Bottomley my Muse shall give her praise.

This is John Bull (quite frank about his debts),
 A fallen angel, yet the most observed
 Of all observers. Him I choose. He gets
 The public ear and stands forth unreserved
 And blunt and all the host of Heaven sets
 At naught, with scandalmongers quite unnerved.
 No other angel is so representative.
 Who never fell are dull and argumentative.

Horatio! Sweet argument is not
 His métier. He ever scorned to think.
 And intellect and art to him are rot.
 An awkward fact he never fails to blink
 When truth and justice seem to hatch a plot
 To bring about his downfall and to sink
 The Empire which he always has his eye on,
 Convinced indeed that he's the British lion.

Therefore as Dante with the Tuscan bard
 So I with B., than whom in present Hell
 There is no fiercer patriot, regard
 And capture for posterity the swell,
 The ebb, the flow—to run the figure hard,
 The undertow of this great miracle.
 If need be we will publish as a serial
 Our notes of England Liberal-Imperial.

II

I CALL that virtue which a man believes
So wholly that his every act must tend
Towards it, even though his conscience cleaves
To nobler aim or some more pleasant end.
It is a virtue even among thieves
To stand by co-believers and to bend
Never to compromise ; to steal (in reason)
And leave no scrap for infidels to seize on.

It is the faith of Privilege (the Peers,
Dukes, Earls and suchlike) that no earthly power,
No, not the wealth of Rothschild or de Beers,
Can bring about a cataclysmal hour
To show that all is not what it appears.
Impassive Privilege upon its tower
Surveys the scene below and takes its toll,
As being part, yet greater than the whole.

The middle classes, living by respect,
Believe in morals as a means of sharing,
Some day, the privilege of the elect,
Which somehow they confuse with overbearing.
They see no courage in the ruling sect
And throw away the fruit and keep the paring.
Incapable of knowing their superiors,
They raise themselves by crushing their inferiors.

We'll say this for the Peerage that they care
 Not one small damn how anyone may feel
 The uses of the Privilege they wear
 So easily. The poor may sweat and squeal
 And suffer. Let them. It is only fair
 That they should work and slave for every meal.
 Someone must work, and if the poor are made for it
 There is no reason why they should be paid for it.

They must have money, but with that they pay
 In rent and price of food and drink and clo'es
 And boots and furniture enough to lay
 A firm foundation for the divers shows
 That make the nation's swagger and display.
 They pay, but where on earth the money goes,
 God knows. The Church won't say, but gives its blessing
 And leaves the conscience-stricken poet guessing.

The system is that he who works shall be
 So poorly paid that he can not afford
 Either to save or with economy
 To buy. But rights, won with the sword
 Or intrigue long ago, his penury
 Still bleed to add to idle people's hoard.
 These rights so press on those poor men who work
 That all who can save up and try to shirk.

At first the game was to possess the land;
 But land without the value labour lends
 Is worthless. Therefore out the greedy hand
 Was stretched and for mere mercenary ends,
 By subtle cunning which none could withstand,
 There was evolved the dodge of dividends.
 Each pound could buy an interest in labour.
 Each monied man could sweat his poorer neighbour.

This I half knew but never saw its wonder
 Until I set out on my pilgrimage.
 My innocence called all such profits plunder
 And was prepared to drop its heritage.
 Upon my ears there broke like peals of thunder
 A voice that cried the glories of the age.
 It was Horatio intent on reaching
 The highest and the lowest with his preaching.

I met Horatio at Sandown Park.
 He had a horse and very kindly told me
 It had no chance of winning (very dark
 The mysteries of racing). Then to scold me
 He began, for lack of faith. A modern ark
 Was England and it could never hold me
 Unless I paired with him and backed his plan
 For government to suit the business man.

We got on very well, and had champagne
 For lunch and dinner at Romano's, where
 He did some business. Then next day again
 We went off racing, ill-assorted pair.
 I listened while he made his projects plain
 And built most lovely castles in the air.
 He was so charming that if I'd had any
 I should have trusted him with my last penny.

For some strange reason he appeared convinced
 That I possessed a bubble reputation.
 He flattered me so grossly that I winced
 And pointed out my weakness in narration.
 He had been told that I had never minced
 Unpleasant truth or used polite evasion.
 That I had not made money out of truth
 He generously put down to my youth.

So we hobnobbed, and ate, and drank, and smoked,
 And went about his business in the City.
 He had three actions in the Courts, provoked
 By scoundrelly attorneys, a committee
 Of creditors and enemies, men soaked
 In prejudice and intrigue. He'd no pity,
 And in the witness-box gave them no quarter.
 They were like drunkards with no drink but water.

He had affairs obscure and complicated,
 A finger in the most surprising pies,
 Large bills and larger cheques (with some post-dated),
 And files of letters praising to the skies
 His active brain, the programme he had stated,
 His growing stock of trenchant battle-cries.
 The ways of party made him very mournful,
 But when I spoke of office he was scornful.

I asked him why, and he looked enigmatic ;
 His lips were twisted and oracular.
 Then, rising with a gesture, blunt, emphatic,
 "Is England to be faithful to her star?"
 He asked. "Is England democratic?
 Then let her know where her best statesmen are!
 What does she want to make and keep her free
 But men of doubtless popularity?"

"All else but this she has. The world in fee,
 A Navy sanspareil, and institutions
 Evolved through ages of sweet liberty,
 And long immunity from revolutions;
 Enormous exports, and beyond the sea
 An Empire; a tradition of ablutions,
 Games, sport, good form, and that most rare commodity,
 Humour distilled down to the point of oddity.

"The Continent? What is it but a hash
 That England settles every now and then?
 Napoleon's genius came to smash
 On England. Why? Because her simple men
 Are lions, kings, free bull-dogs when such trash
 As Frenchmen, Turks, or Russians break their den."
 These words were uttered years and years ago
 Before the Huns were Europe's common foe.

I have forgotten what besides he said.
 A vague remembrance that the English could
 Somehow ignore all portions but the red
 In the Projection of Mercator. Good
 Dwelt in those portions. Englishmen had bled
 In victory upon them, and there stood
 Their flag for trade to follow, after profit.
 All other kinds of people were warned off it.

But will, I thought, the others be content
 To be ignored, and can they well ignore
 The little island off the Continent?
 What if they too are minded to explore
 The habitable earth and raise their fent
 Or bunting to the breeze on some fair shore
 Unoccupied, or occupied by niggers
 Whose heads are innocent of thought or figures?

What if the rest be envious to paint
 The map in other shades, as purple, yellow,
 Or green, or blue, or rainbow? Is "You mayn't!"
 To be the English fiat in a bellow
 Leonine? And should there be complaint,
 What happens then? Does English might so mellow
 Its effects that no one's made to suffer,
 And he who thinks he's hurt is just a duffer?

Unprofitable questions! What is, is.
 Our England's Heaven. Hardly need the sun
 Shine any more. Our light outdazzles his.
 Heaven on earth! The age of gold's begun.
 And there's an end of all old mysteries.
 The English legend's writ that he may run
 Who reads. He has it all in daily doses.
 The Press gives bulletins and diagnoses.

Of thought? Of morals? No, sir, of the marts,
 Of stocks, investments, shipping, grain and coal,
 Of iron, steel, and gold, and cloth, machines and parts,
 Of stone and slate, fish, leather, fur, the whole
 Damn thing. The papers are the charts
 Of modern life. In them you reach the soul
 Of Heaven here on earth. All else is chatter
 About such things as art that make no matter.

These sheets are padded out with tales of crimes,
 Divorce and lawsuits, speeches, plays, and dress,
 And literary pages, and the *Times*
 Has supplements, but these, if one may guess,
 Are paid for by advertisements, those limes
 That play upon the chosen. But the stress
 Is laid on everything but the essential.
 The unimportant makes men deferential.

For all they know and all they need to know
 Is just the state of money. This beside
 All else is unconsidered and may go
 To Hell for all we care. This has been tried
 And found a sure narcotic for our woe,
 The key to Arcady, whence we deride
 The soft imagined goods of bygone ages
 As gins and snares and pretty gilded cages.

Money's the thing! 'Tis money makes us free!
 Free! Free to mock at love and God and passion,
 At honour, joy, ideas, liberty
 Of thought, vice, virtue, feeling. We can lash on
 Journalists to mock at all mortality.
 Eternal money! All else is but fashion.
 Our mocking homage, bought and sold and bartered,
 Is worship of the freedom thou hast chartered.

Therefore have money! Beg it, filch it, steal it,
 Hoard, borrow, lend at usance, save, invest,
 Bargain and cheat. Be sure you'll never feel it.
 If you are rich enough then you are blest.
 If you're a fool, your money will conceal it.
 For social life there needs no other test.
 Manners and wit, good sense and tact have vanished,
 Mocked quite away, and honesty is banished.

Another Eden! This high merit add
 That there's no chance of God Almighty calling,
 No Tree of Knowledge, and no angel bad
 Or good to lead us to another falling,
 No serpent to creep in and drive us mad.
 We are immune from tragedy appalling.
 There's nothing we can feel save money only.
 It's God who's fallen, left out, cold and lonely.

This we've accomplished! We, the English, rovers,
 Adventurers, assisted by the Jews,
 Thinking of naught but profits and turnovers,
 We've made the world our fee to pay us dues.
 Nothing's undone. What any man discovers
 Must profit us, for, heads or tails, he'll lose.
 The world's great accoucheur and monthly nurse,
 All men bow down before our mighty purse.

And yet we keep the forms of ancient days,
 A God, a church, the law, a moral code,
 All kinds of pimps of flattery and praise,
 As artists, writers, tailors *à la mode*,
 And brilliant figures for the public gaze,
 Well paid to bear, like pack-horses, the load
 Of our collective vanity. They stagger
 'Neath the burden of Empire's bluff and swagger.

We have a King, and officers of sorts,
 And pay them well to keep up the pretence
 That we detest 'Noll Cromwell with his warts,
 And Wilkes and Fox and Cobden, and a fence
 We ring round pint-pots trying to hold quarts,
 Fee'd men who'll babble anything but sense.
 We take our monied freedom as of course.
 We always drive the cart before the horse.

O lovely life, when everything's a joke !
 Religion, honour, probity and truth.
 Imagination, if it ever woke
 In us would die as die our grace and youth.
 Beauty and love by money are bespoke
 And cut to measure, cut down without ruth.
 That's just the joke we always find amusing
 To think of what we gain by what we're losing.

We lose emotion, liberty and frankness,
 But where's the good that they have ever done us ?
 Emotion is a weed whose stifling rankness
 Has choked the growth that solid thinking won us.
 And liberty's a spark that in the dankness
 Of English air's no use to those who run us.
 So we will back the caucus ministerial
 Whose humour is the Liberal-Imperial.

III

Now in detail let's think of England's bliss,
Of what we've done since lucky Waterloo
Rid Europe of a tyrant and the hiss
Of warring snakes was silenced, and the new
Invention, money, carried us to this,
Our Heaven where we've nothing more to do.
It is, I promise you, worth admiration,
Our great improvement on the first creation.

First we have built Leviathan, a city
Nine miles by nine, a Babel with no tower,
Also with no design, where without pity
Are huddled millions to help raise our power ;
Where men of brains and women who are pretty
Are given fame and homage for an hour ;
Where common men and women mate and breed
And slake with rent the noble landlord's greed.

True, there's romance ; the river, and St Paul's,
Hyde Park, the Tower, Kensington, St James',
The Quadrant, Piccadilly, City Halls,
Museums, houses tableted with names
Illustrious. Romance ! Romance still calls,
And still is heard, though modern living shames
Its loveliness and covers up with grime
The legend and the honour of old time.

There's new romance. It lives in dirty streets,
 In railways, workshops, factories and dens
 Where women feed machines, whose thudding beats
 Upon the brain and fashions citizens
 White-faced and dazed. Their days are filled with feats
 Of hourly endurance in their pens.
 (I quite forgot the romance of the Zoo.
 There you shall find rare beasts imprisoned too.)

'Tis part of Heaven, therefore must be right,
 A glance at it is all we need to give.
 The poor are on the whole quite gay and bright,
 And, strangely, seem to like the way they live.
 They can indulge their pleasures in the night—
 They've only two and those are fugitive.
 They're kind but reckless. They have their deserts.
 A woman's paid three bob a dozen shirts.

They'd be quite charming if they did not smell
 And weren't so stupid, or so slow and lazy.
 Their part of Heaven is the most like Hell
 And drives good men like Galsworthy half crazy.
 They live like others for the dinner-bell
 And every other thought is dim and hazy.
 Yet they stand by the English church and state
 And keep for foreigners a sullen hate.

They are the background wellnigh Rembrandtesque
 From which we paint up to a high light on
 The nose of Rothschild, working at his desk,
 Snuffing up sums, the prolegomenon
 To sleight of hand, the golden arabesque
 That sweeps high Heaven to the rubicon.
 This is the point essential, syllogistic,
 At which the cult of money's almost mystic.

And yet, though we've defied the simple laws
 Of nature, and made new light, and half expelled
 The spirit out of matter, and can cause
 The end of pestilence come down from eld ;
 And eat up distance, stop the very jaws
 Of death, in one great law divine we're held.
 That's change, and lo ! great Rothschild's nasal organ
 Has been put out of joint by Pierpont Morgan.

But *plus ça change, plus c'est la même.* We'll shift
 The high light and the picture loses none
 Of its strange eerie beauty and its drift
 Is still the same, that never 'neath the sun
 Was such a case of perfect wholesale lift,
 So many men beneath the sway of one.
 The tale of Midas in reverse appears :
 He touches gold, the rest wear asses' ears.

We're proud of them. We wag them and the longest
 Win honours, women, pleasure, high success.
 The race is no more to the swiftest or the strongest
 But often to the vainest. Silliness
 Is more than cunning. Right bows to the wrongest.
 For flattery we'll give all we possess.
 In Heaven we have grown so queer and nervy
 That life is inside-out and topsy-turvy.

We'd not believe it Heaven otherwise.
 And therefore we have Pharisees and Scribes,
 Musicians, artists, writers to tell lies
 And make us feel we're paid when we take bribes.
 They help us to make light of human ties
 As weakness in the chosen of the tribes.
 Experience and passion so perplex us
 That we reduce them to the money nexus.

Our feelings therefore live beneath our skins
 And give us none, or very little, trouble.
 We weep at mothers, babies, certain sins,
 And so our pleasure in them we redouble.
 We laugh when any solemn fool begins
 To take *au sérieux* the human bubble.
 Things harsh and grim drive us to giddy laughter,
 For we are daft and growing quickly dafter.

Yet we have found no way of getting rid
 Of politics. We'd do so in a minute
 But for ambitious men who make a bid
 For place and power, and when they are in it
 Forget their place and quickly put the lid
 On power for fear that other men should win it.
 We suffer them and find their tricks amusing.
 They keep their trade and life from ever fusing.

There was a time before the dawn of Heaven
 When parties stood for clean opposing notions.
 The Tories were for bossing all the seven
 Seas, five continents, trade routes and oceans.
 The Liberals said, England is a leaven
 And must be soft and subtle in her motions.
 How can she teach the others to be free
 If half her sons are sunk in poverty?

Neither was right and neither understood
 The other, and yet each could discipline
 The other's thought to see in trees a wood.
 When one was out the other must be in;
 And so between them both they worked for good.
 Whatever happened, England stood to win.
 The parties kept themselves so well in order
 That neither often crossed real mischief's border.

Yet with success in trade and wide expansion
 The Tories got the credit, through old Dizzy,
 Of having built so Heavenly a mansion
 As justified them in their actions busy.
 The luckless Liberals had put their fancy on
 Too dark a horse that was not worth a tizzy.
 They had no cry would win a by-election
 And lived unplaced in gloom and dark dejection.

They could not make out how the Tories did it.
 What won them votes? Not brains, not eloquence.
 Where had the Tories got this mighty credit?
 They'd no reforms. They'd saved nor pounds nor pence.
 What was their bid? Let Liberals outbid it.
 At least they'd raise their cry with common-sense.
 They found the great Imperial idea
 Had bred apace since Palmerston's Crimea.

And yet the Tories hardly seemed to know
 How good a thing they'd stumbled on by chance.
 They still regarded catching votes as low—
 The kind of thing you'd look to find in France.
 The Empire was an axiom and so
 Stood well above the claptrap of romance.
 They much preferred to pour down ridicule
 On Liberal reforms, and dish Home Rule.

One man the Tories had, ex-Liberal,
 Who thought the Empire stood in need of booming;
 They held it vulgar in their bran-new pal
 And would not see the cloud that he saw looming.
 They thought him odd, almost theatrical,
 In the strange attitudes he was assuming.
 He'd heard, which they had not, of Cecil Rhodes,
 Knew what his name foreboded and forebodes.

He knew that there's no credit in reform,
 That Home Rule was not worth its disrepute,
 That if he wished to take the game by storm
 He'd better find and hold the strongest suit.
 If he could only blow the Tories warm
 And teach their young idea how to shoot
 Then in the Transvaal with its Golden Rand
 He had a shout would surely beat the band.

The Tories being nice and still fastidious
 Disliked the early products of the Cape.
 That type of Jew they thought debased and hideous
 And much too like the prehistoric ape.
 And Africa, not being too invidious,
 They saw outlined in that distasteful shape.
 Not being certain who would pay the racket
 They heard their new friend's scheme but would not back it.

They hesitated, hesitating, lost.
 They fumbled, floundered, dared not touch the thing
 Or test it on the hustings. Like a frost
 Their timid speeches nipped the blossoming,
 Its petals on the vacant wind were tossed,
 A touch of winter in the dawn of spring.
 The Liberals had office for a month or two
 And jumped the Tories' claim and kept it too.

They said, we are Imperial, we are,
 We democrats with excellent ideas
 Accept the Empire, as the moth the star,
 It guides, it leads, our plans and panaceas.
 At running Empire we'll outpoint the Czar
 And flout the Kaiser with his grenadiers.
 The country shall of Empire have its fill
 And swallow, in the end, the Home Rule Bill.

Now Liberals and Tories are alike
 In this. They think that what they think entails
 The public good. How what they think may strike
 The common man they never think. It fails?
 They'll fight and fall in the last ditch or dyke
 (A job of sorts) before their spirit quails.
 They never know the joy of human thinking
 And fallacies they swallow without blinking.

Both swallowed down the new back-veldt religion
 And were two minds but with a single thought:
 How first to catch and then to roast their pigeon,
 The British public, which can not be bought.
 Each had their bank to build their noble bridge on,
 But would the public stump up as it ought?
 For building airy bridges is expensive
 And the demands of Empire were extensive.

The Empire-builder in his house, Groot Schuur,
 Was quite indifferent to party squabbles.
 Let them make haste. The thing was ripe and sure,
 If they'd stop shrieking when the state-ship wobbles.
 It was no case of either kill or cure,
 But of a meal, a bite and two-three gobbles.
 There came a time when he'd no longer wait,
 The fish had swallowed down his hook and bait.

The Tories by good luck were then in power;
 They ran the country or they let it run.
 'Twas fate, they said. The man had met the hour.
 (For men talk thus when villainies are done.)
 They called the working classes manhood's flower,
 As rich men always do when war's begun.
 The fish was hooked, but took a deal of landing,
 No Tory reputations were left standing.

The two republics, brought beneath the flag,
 Vowed fealty, and England paid the bill.
 The Tories had no voices left to brag,
 The Liberals replaced them with much skill.
 The Tories broke the house, but all the swag
 The Liberals locked safely in their till.
 God save King Edward, guardian of peace,
 Now taken on at ninety-nine years' lease.

The nine and ninety years from nineteen-six
 Was calculated. Now then to retrench,
 Reform, reconstitute, in short to fix
 The destinies of Empire. First the French
 Shall be our friends and they shall freely mix
 With us and help the friendly bond to clench.
 With gazing on our brilliance till they're blinded
 They too will be Imperially minded.

There's Africa to be cut up in slices
 And Persia open to some influence
 (And why not ours?). Ambassadors' advices
 Imply that Turkey's weak in her defence.
 There's Russia's claim. But find out what her price is,
 We do not claim (of course) omnipotence.
 With Liberals in power there's no question
 That Liberty's our aim past all suggestion.

There lies our scheme, not made in Birmingham.
 • Our own. The Empire, Liberal *in esse*,
 Has flung o'er half the world its oriflamme,
 The power born at Agincourt and Cressy
 Makes half the world when swearing mutter Damn,
 And Englishmen are aped where men are dressy,
 A twenty-year-old Cockney comic song
 Is sung in pidgin-English in Hong-Kong.

The thing was done by lawyers not by squires.
 That makes it legal. Lawyers know the law.
 On every summit light the beacon fires
 To tell the world to hold us in due awe.
 We've done this thing, by skill in pulling wires,
 We've got the chestnut with the Tory paw.
 Ring out the old and ring the new world in,
 We've got the gold and got it without sin.

Our conscience is as clear as running water,
 The Nonconformist cannot raise his voice,
 The wicked Tories willed the ghastly slaughter,
 But we, good Liberals; in peace rejoice.
 The Tories are like Jephthah and his daughter.
 Their party is their victim. They've no choice.
 Now we can take it easy. We are free
 Except (perhaps) in Foreign Policy.

That's not so easy—Empire's very well,
 But if we take the good old Tory line
 Of being God's own high and mighty swell
 (It seems we must or Dukes won't bid us dine),
 Then we must learn to say, O, go to Hell,
 In diplomatic language, to the swine
 Who talk about Bagdad or Ispahan
 Or German railways run through Turkestan.

The best way is, we think, to trim our sail
 And let the Foreign Office do its best.
 It knows these languages and draws a veil,
 And lifts it now and then at our request.
 We have prevailed and always shall prevail.
 What we can't have is sweeter unpossessed.
 We cannot have retrenchment, peace, reform,
 If we're aware of an impending storm. -

We're pledged to Home Rule, pensions, rare
 Refreshing fruit and God knows what beside.
 And we, unlike a woman's tender care,
 Can not forgetful be of what we've cried.
 We've promised that all Englishmen shall share
Tot homines in our nobilicide.
 All foreign policies are immaterial—
 We must and shall be Liberal-Imperial.

IV

It works! By Jove, it works, this subtle plan.
We undertake to give self-government,
As it is practised in the Isle of Man,
To all our colonies, to circumvent
Sedition in the Empire's caravan.
And every million we account well spent
That fortifies Imperial defences
And aggravates Imperial expenses.

We have to feed the Clyde shipbuilding yards,
The Tyne and Barrow, Birmingham, and Wales.
For if we don't, it's plainly on the cards
The voters there will up and twist our tails.
Wales is a land of druids, harpists, bards,
But mining is the thing that turns the scales.
Ideal Empire is our stated goal,
But, after all, its life depends on coal.

And if our wealth on mining coal depends,
There's nothing burns it half so fast as ships.
The more coal burned, the higher dividends.
We'll always have new Dreadnoughts on the slips.
They must have guns, of course for peaceful ends,
To guard the King, say, on his Channel trips.
We have police to quell revolt or riot.
We only want to burn our coal in quiet.

We threaten no one. No one threatens us.
 Why should they threaten? Who is there to grumble?
 We've had our way with hardly any fuss.
 The ancient order has begun to crumble,
 We've broken up the Tory blunderbuss,
 The House of Lords. Their House of Cards will tumble.
 In ships and guns more powerful than they,
 We've made it clear that they have had their day.

More ships, more money in the party coffers,
 That means reform, retrenchment, noble schemes
 To help the poor, that is, if cranks and scoffers
 Will only let us realise our dreams.
 We'll jump at every single chance that offers.
 With plans and cures our party fairly teems.
 Home Rule is not our only platform plank.
 We've thought for all, of every class and rank.

Two-headed Janus, someone called our leader.
 A thousand heads could not contain his thought.
 Each of his thoughts is a prolific breeder,
 And all are trained to do just what they ought.
 Each minister's a wet-nurse and a feeder,
 For love of it, and all of them are taught
 To think alike, and all of them agree
 That England's coal is best burned on the sea.

You call that unproductive? It's insuring
 The life-blood of the Empire, guarantees
 That England's wealth shall grow and be enduring
 As long as there is traffic on the seas.
 It makes her trebly sure of still procuring
 The food she cannot raise; and, if you please,
 No Englishman could sleep sound in his bed
 Unless he knew that next week he'll be fed.

The Germans have an Empire, but a vile,
 A thing of blood and iron, with a place
 Called Krupp's at Essen, which with wicked guile
 Eats German coal, and half the populace
 Is ground and drilled in military file
 To sell great guns to half the human race.
 A conscript army gives Krupp's its excuse.
 Now God be thanked, we're free from that abuse.

We break the vicious circle they are in
 By being Liberal, with due respect
 For ancient institutions and the thin
 Pretence that we have still a ruling sect.
 When abject poverty's your only sin
 Your ruling class is large but still select.
 This we've accomplished since we dished the Tories;
 Now few are barred from London's social glories.

We're free from prejudice against the Jews,
 Once they have left the East End and have risen
 By Hackney, Bayswater and its purlieus,
 With their large wives whom diamonds bedizen,
 And very few to dine with them refuse.
 They are a kind of top-mast or a mizen.
 A Cassel, Samuel, or Edgar Speyer
 Can keep our climbers climbing ever higher.

And all are climbers. No one's at the top,
 Since no one's ever reached it. All climb on.
 So thick they throng, that nobody can stop
 Or heed the fate of his companion.
 And others come when weaklings faint and drop,
 No time to pause and look where they are gone.
 The entry to this new august Society
 Is won by money or by notoriety.

It is as though the Revolution rabble
 In old Versailles had decked them out to play
 At noble lords and wits, and with their babble
 Half-hypnotised had driven sense away.
 In thought, art, music, poetry they dabble,
 And wear new clothes and jewels for the play.
 With so much playing in the audience
 The players' art becomes a thin pretence.

The Democratic Empire of '06
 Was born, as we have shown, in blood and death.
 The old, green England passed across the Styx,
 When greatest Britain drew its infant breath.
 Emancipated females armed with bricks,
 Strange, mannish as Good Queen Elizabeth,
 Declared that they would drown the precious brat
 Unless 'twas nursed by Woman, Democrat.

The working man, remembering the war,
 And "manhood's flower" left to starve and rot,
 Observing how old England crossed the bar,
 With one clear call, staked out a goodly plot,
 And said, We won't remain just as we are;
 We want a damn sight more than we have got.
 You've got your Trusts, we'll have our Unions
 And make you shift your bloody sit-upons.

Except these two, and no one thought them serious,
 There were no clouds upon the clear blue sky.
 The women seemed just mad and half delirious,
 Exasperated Wadmans, green in eye.
 The working men were far more deleterious,
 For they had votes to reckon by and by.
 And yet what mattered these uneasy lives
 In this the age of grand superlatives?

The age of speed ! The age of records broken !
 The richest age the world has ever seen !
 The age of grand hotels, and, more betoken,
 The age when man first flew in a machine !
 The age that takes its thought from Thorpe-le-Soken
 And dreams wherever H. G. Wells has been.
 It grew up in a night. A change so thorough
 Has not been seen since old Cloundcuckooborough.

Among things lost were ease and quiet leisure,
 Things worthless in themselves yet very sweet.
 Now no one sipped but all gulped down their pleasure,
 And pleasure grew in every noisy street.
 The very poorest had their humble measure.
 Provision was both lavish and complete,
 In palaces most gaudy, but unsightly,
 Where sobs and laughter were regaled twice-nightly.

Soon picture houses were as thick as pubs
 To give a stupor without being drunk,
 In watching, say, an ant-heap with its grubs,
 Or warships chase a Chinese slaving-junk.
 All sorts and kinds of moving Tales of Tubs
 In surfeit till the thinking mind is sunk,
 Impressions on the brain so swiftly saddled
 That very soon the poor wee thing is addled.

And much the same takes place in higher quarters,
 Though life itself is there the picture-show,
 Benumbing all the hopeful sons and daughters
 Of those who know those who are in the know.
 That kind of knowledge other knowledge slaughters
 And brings the educated level low.
 What does it matter in the throng and press ?
 It has no other standard than success.

Successful lawyers govern politics.
 Successful authors rule the moral roast.
 Successful grocers serve the Peers to mix.
 Successful sportsmen are our special boast.
 Success has been our god since nineteen-six.
 Successful men are priests. Of them the most
 Successful are a race almost Levitical,
 Endued with rights transcending the political.

What they can do would make the devil jealous.
 He never had so clear a course at men.
 But what they do, that nobody can tell us,
 Nor how, nor why, and neither where nor when.
 We know that they can lightly buy and sell us,
 And when they've sold us, buy us back again.
 The evidence is only circumstantial,
 Their mystic power is the High Financial.

Somehow an airy fabric has been built
 In which the British Empire's but a cell.
 It is supposed that men like Vanderbilt
 Can find their way about it fairly well.
 But in a bee-hive when the honey's spilt
 Why it was so the queen-bee could not tell,
 Or how the hive was built. Our fabric's grown
 Of spiders' webs that round our souls are thrown.

That's but a guess, but this I surely know,
 That it is cold and cramped and bleak and bare.
 I watch in gardens how the lilies grow,
 And how free birds and insects take the air,
 And how they sing and hum and blithely go,
 Just as they please, here, there and everywhere.
 But we live in the palace of our doom
 And grudge each other even elbow-room.

In love we are like schoolboys grinning, nudging
 At some broad passage in a poet.
 Our charity's another kind of grudging—
 We hate the poor but are too soft to show it.
 We'd gladly leave the luckless wretches drudging
 But are afraid lest other folk should know it.
 At heart we know ourselves to be confined
 But never dream our prison is our mind.

That cannot be. The mind of man's a wonder
 And must be clear of his deceitful heart.
 His mind has kept his life and Life asunder,
 His destiny and nature quite apart.
 It might be true that man must live by plunder
 But for his hymn to truth and beauty, Art.
 There lies the token of his true proclivity,
 The song he's sung through all his harsh captivity.

The grim old fabric of his grudging mind
 Has grown so huge, that doors are now unlocked
 And walls torn down, and dungeons undermined.
 Where neither air nor light was, holes are knocked.
 And hapless creatures where they peaked and pined
 Now find that they can move and no one's shocked.
 They rush together in a wild confusion.
 They herd and huddle and resent intrusion.

They find themselves in galleried saloons
 Among a litter of old stones and rubble.
 The air is filled with gay and vulgar tunes
 And they are charmed and half forget their trouble
 In laughing at the antics of buffoons.
 Soon wages rise. At once the prices double.
 They're told that they're an Empire and a nation
 And shall enjoy the boon of education.

They learn to read and pat ! a flood of papers
Comes tearing down, a glucous inky spate
Of jokes, excitements, fun and comic capers,
A halfpenny a dip, the cheapest rate.

Another stream, exuding heady vapours,
Gives them the news and keeps them up-to-date ;
And lest the task of reading it should bore them,
The headlines, stars and snippets do it for them.

Unfathomable public ! When it's tapped
For halfpennies and pennies there's no end to it.
Art, form and literary style are scrapped.
The public's dull and journalists must bend to it.
Great things and small must be in jargon wrapped ;
And as for thought, the public is no friend to it.
Elections, frauds, a crime, a railway strike,
Exploring, science, all must look alike.

One day the boom is better household bread,
The next the murder of a prostitute,
The next the Churches, or how geese are fed,
Or a divorce or breach-of-promise suit.
The whole of life is covered, A to Z,
But nothing's ever given time to root.
A shock, a thrill, at best a soporific,
Are gotten by this industry prolific.

Its basis is the blood-and-thunder tale
Or sentimental sugared novelette,
And ere the appetite for them shall fail
The sun shall on the British Empire set.
They're hanging in a nicely balanced scale.
It's hard to see how it can be upset.
Excited, doped, the proletariat
Can never know what they are getting at.

So when they're told, day in, day out, that they
 Are greater far than either Greece or Rome,
 They gulp it down and are content to pay
 For greatness brought into the humble home.
 They dream that Greece and Rome have passed away
 Perhaps because Great Britain rules the foam.
 The blood and thunder passed with Mr Kruger,
 Now they can eat the sentimental sugar.

Half-civilised, their thoughts are all fantastic,
 Just dreams their writers tickle out of sleep
 And colour with a wild, enthusiastic
 Belief in calling monsters from the deep.
 Their minds are yet more stiff and inelastic
 Than when they made poor ardent Shelley weep.
 Their sleep on poetry has set a ban,
 Their spirit is expressed in *Peter Pan*.

Ethereal Shelley! Feeling in thy bones
 In what small room dear Freedom must be bound,
 Thou heard'st the people's sighs and bitter groans
 And show'dst them where sweet music could be found.
 Now they have music on their gramophones
 And Lauder is than thou far more renowned.
 But there's no room for spirits so ethereal,
 Since England's great and Liberal-Imperial.

The poets used to look to France for healing,
 But now that France is safely in our pocket
 We can fall back on our reserve of feeling.
 Our store is there; we've only to unlock it.
 We keep it locked, in terror of revealing
 How we have burned the candle to the socket.
 We know, alas! there have been secret orgies
 Through all the righteous ages since the Georges.

It seems you can't be Liberal without
 Some liberation of humane desire.
 The problem is how we're to let it out,
 And yet not set our social house on fire ;
 And how to bring the Tories to a rout
 Without their dragging us into the mire.
 We might have got the Tories sent to Hell
 And won Home Rule but for *l'affaire* Parnell.

The Irish might have helped us out and got
 The Tories dished without South Africa.
 We might have won the country scot and lot
 And done without the Empire and the star
 Of Cecil Rhodes and left the Jingo rot
 To cranks who'd soon have been unpopular.
 We might have made a very different bid,
 But things have gone quite well on what we did.

We've had ten years of feverish excitement
 And kept our jobs with periodic changes,
 We've shown quite clearly what the Tory fight meant,
 And how much farther our idea ranges.
 Our every Act has been a strong indictment
 Of Torydom. But what seems very strange is
 That with retrenchment and reform in stock,
 The world's our cradle but it will not rock.

Our baby is the human race, but still
 It seems uneasy, restless, difficult.
 It sometimes looks as though it must be ill,
 Our lullaby Imperial don't lull't.
 The case defies our diagnostic skill.
 We daren't prescribe for fear of the result.
 We've tried our patent Liberal emulsions,
 Perhaps they'll save the infant from convulsions.

We'll take to prayer and call it Mental Science,
 Relying on our trained gymnastic Souls.
 We've got, thank God, the Franco-Russ alliance,
 To keep it warm we'll go on burning coals.
 Let others waste their breath in hot defiance,
 Our ports and ships shall go on taking tolls.
 It's clear that at the polls we can't be beat
 As long as we don't tamper with the Fleet.

That's all we know and all we need to know.
 There's not a vote to capture with Free Trade,
 Which passed beyond discussion long ago.
 Of ground-rents there is little to be made.
 Insurance cards have made a sorry show,
 And possibly the House was best unpaid.
 The Webbs have told us to reform the work'uses,
 But we have got to give the public circuses.

And, on the whole, perhaps we might do worse.
 We cannot think for all the human race.
 The cradle will not rock, let others nurse
 The brat and wipe its ugly, fractious face.
 We'll think of nothing but the British purse
 And do our best to keep our friends in place.
 We've had enough of patching-up and mending.
 The money's there. The public's all for spending.

The Government departments are too small ;
 They don't make half the show they ought to.
 There's more display in Manchester's Town Hall,
 And no one will respect us till they're taught to.
 It may be true that pride precedes a fall,
 But pride of Empire is what we are brought to.
 We've got to please the public, or go under,
 And we must keep them in a state of wonder.

The War Office is shabby in Pall Mall;
 And though we have no thought of war or fighting,
 A nobler building would be just as well,
 With fifteen hundred clerks all busy writing.
 Inspiring thought! But, if the Army's swell,
 The Navy's sweller and won't stand such slighting.
 The Admiralty building shall be bigger
 To let the Navy cut a finer figure.

And on its roof the wireless shall raise
 (A tender subject. Let us be discreet)
 Its antennæ to Heaven in such praise
 As never architect could hope to beat.
 O'er all the Empire it shall send its rays,
 Likewise impress the people in the street.
 Its thin tall masts, ascending and aerial,
 Shall crown our structure Liberal-Imperial.

V

BEFORE we mark the sequel let us visit
 In turn each class at home, from Kew to Bow,
 From Golder's Green to Brixton; not to quiz it,
 But to discover what they have to show.
 Armed with Who's Who, a Year-book, a Where-is-it?
 From north to south and east to west we'll go,
 By bus and Tube. We'll scan our fellow-travellers
 For hints to aid our work as Life-unravellers.

And first a Duke whose income is about
 A quarter of a million, got from rent,
 Ground-rent and way-leaves, and from coal dug out
 From land he's never seen, on which he's spent
 Not twopence, though it's his without a doubt
 For being born. It's his past argument.
 The tenants show him almost feudal loyalty.
 On all their work he takes a handsome royalty.

His seat is furnished like a Strand hotel
 (The pictures show his ancestors had taste).
 He's married, say, a rich Chicago belle,
 Who cultivates the Royal bust and waist,
 And studies the topography of Hell
 To castigate the wicked and unchaste,
 Believing England's moral force dependent
 Upon the line from which her Duke's descendant.

The Duke himself is rather isolated,
 And no one cares or wants him very much.
 The House of Lords is half-disintegrated ;
 The country's life it never seems to touch.
 And though his birthday every year is fêted,
 His life is like a rabbit's in a hutch.
 A parlour pet, he's in a sorry fix,
 For he's forgotten all his parlour tricks.

A century ago he might have had
 With far less money a much better time.
 For brilliant people would have been quite glad
 To stay with him, and poets with their rhyme
 His praises would have sung. Now people bad
 Just use him in their weary social climb.
 His ancient name is useful to promoters,
 Or to impress the sleepy rural voters.

He goes to Court in full dress and regalia,
 Attends the opening of Parliament,
 Goes racing, shooting, stalking, inter alia,
 And need not think of how much he has spent,
 And travel gives him ample marginalia
 Of pleasures, with the Duchess off the scent.
 And yet in nothing is there satisfaction ;
 His rank and wealth control his every action.

He cannot bear a hint of contradiction.
 His word is law or else he will not speak.
 The slightest hint of any kind of friction
 Will make him lose his temper for a week.
 An independent thought is an infliction
 Which he regards as a malicious freak.
 He and the Duchess every night play Halma ;
 The family's done nothing since the Alma.

But if you go from Manchester to Bolton
 You'll see his name on passing railway trucks.
 A kind of fame he shares with Henry Doulton,
 Who in that kind of fame is surely *dux*.
 In crucibles the human race is molten,
 But he is at the cool end of the flux.
 That's all he does and all he is, a lily
 Which, lacking beauty, cannot but look silly.

Yet his existence is the perfect model
 The highest Englishmen can hope to reach.
 An English boy, as soon as he can toddle,
 Is shown this life as past the bounds of speech,
 And he's a tick, a swat, a mollycoddle,
 Who looks at other pebbles on the beach.
 A life of manly, gentlemanly sport,
 A house in town and access to the Court.

What more could man desire? In autumn grouse,
 In winter pheasants, hundreds in a day,
 And hounds, a drag, a Leicester country house,
 Young people ragging, while their elders play.
 O! he must have the spirit of a louse
 Who's offered these and turns his thoughts away.
 Domestic servants read with shining eyes
 Of such a life as it were Paradise.

Yet all cannot attain it, for it needs
 A special kind of training, starting young.
 At Public Schools the well-selected seeds
 Are planted and manured with special dung
 Of rooted prejudice, and all the weeds
 Of thought and fancy to the winds are flung.
 And by the time a boy is sent to college
 He thoroughly despises all his knowledge.

He'll spend a few absurd years in the Guards,
 Or, if the F.O. takes him, he will give
 An hour or two of work which he discards
 For lunching with some wealthy relative,
 A boring aunt whose generous regards
 Fill him with hopes she has not long to live.
 And when she dies and leaves him her estate,
 Though rich himself he seeks a richer mate.

Two thousand pounds a year, he thinks, is just
 Enough for him to keep in with the keepers,
 And if his place is in the upper crust,
 That is, among the privileged, the reapers
 Of other people's sowing, then he must
 Accept the tendrils of those climbing creepers,
 The rich mammas, with daughters highly finished,
 Designed for swells whose fortunes are diminished.

Exactly for such couples Mendelssohn
 Composed his Wedding March. So let us leave them,
 For ever bound, each bound to live alone
 Among the kind of people who'll receive them.
 They think they've made the best of life their own,
 But you and I, who know, cannot believe them.
 Their life's a lie. The woman needs to feign it.
 We'll go among the folks who can't attain it.

'Tis sour grapes, but there is other fruit,
 And many have a preference for plums.
 The grape's for bed-sides. People of repute
 Like picking at a pie with their two thumbs.
 They like to feel their pleasure's also loot
 Round which a waspish competition hums.
 The ordinary human mind must covet
 Before it tastes its pleasure or can love it.

So now we have the bees and wasps about
 Our ears and hardly know what we are doing.
 In other words, we're fairly in the rout
 Politico-financial, where is brewing
 A constant mischief, half of which comes out.
 The other half remains for ever stewing.
 And in the stew good brains are boiled to rags,
 And yet the zeal for pleasure never flags.

Excitement were a better word, since all
 Is boiled down to sensation, nothing higher,
 Nothing subtler. There's nothing great or small
 But it is used to slake a hot desire
 To have things piping hot or not at all.
 A constant titillation they require
 With novelty and strangeness at their call.
 They'll go all lengths to gratify their senses
 And worship those who give them new pretences.

The women leave their children to the nurse.
 Their men are off intriguing in the city,
 In Parliament, in clubs, in bars or worse.
 Their days are spent in trying to be witty
 At friends' expense; in dressing on a purse
 That should be large enough to make them pretty,
 And might do so but for their wayward passion
 For sacrificing Nature to the fashion.

They call on women whom they hate as chicer
 Or better dressed than they. They do their shopping,
 Write letters, telephone, read, talk and bicker,
 And bustle round, afraid of ever stopping,
 Support themselves with tea or other liquor,
 And will not take a rest although they're dropping.
 Their constant dread is lest they might be losing
 Some novelty their set has found amusing.

Upon their lips a constant tittle-tattle
 Of pictures, music, books, and food and men,
 Old furniture and china—rattle, rattle,
 And all the doings underneath Big Ben,
 How husbands are the queerest kind of cattle,
 How lovers are wellnigh as queer again.
 And when they talk of scandal and divorces,
 One understands Swift's preference for horses.

The part they play in intrigue and affairs
 Is disproportionate to what they understand,
 But when things are reduced to splitting hairs
 Appropriately then they take a hand.
 Their artifice, their little charms and snares,
 Will often serve important fish to land.
 It seems to them nor cynical nor cruel
 When services are paid for with a jewel.

Another step reveals the world of letters,
 Of plays (which pay the most), revues and books,
 Where authors male and female ape their betters
 As far as income goes and food and looks.
 They shackle on themselves the money fetters,
 But even then they live on tenterhooks
 Lest they should lose their *flair* and run to seed
 And write the stuff that no one wants to read.

We've reached perhaps the most amusing lot
 That ever were collected on the globe.
 They're grouped like savages around a pot
 In which for pickings thumbs and fingers probe.
 Their appetite would shame a Hottentot,
 Their patience and endurance beggar Job,
 For his great itch afflicted but his skin,
 While theirs is partly outward, more within.

An itch for praise and general applause,
 An itch for seeing their great names in print,
 An itch to seem to stand for some high cause,
 An itch to be a rival to the Mint,
 An itch to be a peacock among daws,
 An itch to be beyond the slightest hint
 Of failure or unpopular opinions,
 Which might scare off the crowd of useful minions.

They think the nothing which is always right;
 And ambiguity to such a point
 They've brought that they can always sit and write
 Two thousand words of humbug to anoint
 Whatever movement brings a prize in sight.
 They'll even say the times are out of joint
 (Although they love them) to keep out a rival
 From whom they've lost all hope of a connival.

They know or know the names of everybody
 Worth the knowing. They talk of sales and prices
 Both old and new from Dickens to Tom Noddy,
 And credit half their world with secret vices,
 The other half with perpetrating shoddy.
 A constant spite their conversation spices.
 One lucky hit will make a great career.
 The same old book comes out year after year.

This entertaining gang's a kind of junction
 Between the upper and the upper-middle.
 It exercises a most useful function
 Resembling that of Messrs Scott and Liddell
 Between two worlds, and it has no compunction
 In using words the hungry mind to diddle.
 It is a brake, all new ideas curbing,
 Which in the monied world might be disturbing.

It keeps the British public from approaching
 A vital thought until it has been chewed
 For thirty years at least by countries broaching
 The vat of thought with vigour still renewed.
 It keeps new life from living and encroaching
 On the preserves of conscious rectitude.
 It hides away the kind of truth that matters,
 And clothes the public mind in rags and tatters.

They have a varied stock of reach-me-downs,
 They reconcile the Bible's God and science
 For anxious people in provincial towns
 Who on their double words have full reliance.
 With adjectives they qualify their nouns
 Till sense and meaning are set at defiance.
 They've all the proper sentiments on tap
 When fact in fiction shows a horrid gap.

They sentimentalise the simpler feelings
 And blow them out until they're like balloons.
 And all the subtler, finer human dealings,
 Unfit for pleasant Sunday afternoons,
 Are made to look obscene, the lustful squealings
 Of creatures far too like and near baboons.
 Sweet fancy's sent aloft in coloured toys,
 And gone from earth are all our human joys.

Of course the danger is that, by extracting
 The fancy and the obvious delights,
 What's left, since Nature's constantly exacting,
 Will grudge the pleasure of these pretty flights.
 And passion too will join in such play-acting
 And seek the little thrill of flying kites.
 So love and energy are dissipated.
 What should be loved is now reviled and hated.

And in the end a wistful melancholy
 Plays comic tunes upon a penny whistle,
 And English humour, sane, robust and jolly,
 Can find no rose and puts up with a thistle ;
 And lacking myrtle, plucks instead the holly ;
 And wanting beef will gnaw at bone and gristle.
 And when it's bored with that, then back it comes
 To feed on literary sugar-plums.

What makes things worse, our cousin and our scholar,
 America, still looks across the ocean
 For mental fare, and the almighty dollar
 Commands a stream of spurious emotion,
 Which English writers struggle for and collar
 And labour in with highly paid devotion.
 Balloons and coloured toys are sent so high
 Inflated fancy fails and will not fly.

Immortal Fancy ! Tumbled in the dust,
 Or fled to other minds and other scenes,
 Thou wast affrighted by the noxious lust
 That emanated from the magazines.
 On England thou hadst laid a special trust,
 For only England knows what Fancy means.
 Immortal, incorruptible thou art !
 Thou hast but fled the clatter of the mart.

Thy name in vain is taken and indited,
 And thou art made to seem a soft denial
 Of truth and beauty for the dull, benighted
 And illiterate. Thy precious phial,
 The distillation of all joys delighted,
 That sent the hours spinning round the dial,
 They sought to empty at one greedy gulp.
 It turned to poison and their minds to pulp.

Now let's pass on. The sight is too depressing
 And there is surely something less corrupt.
 With modern progress some must be progressing.
 The end of all cannot be so abrupt,
 There must be something worth a word of blessing.
 We'll look for it when we have dined and supped,
 And plucked up courage for the final burst,
 And hope, believing we have faced the worst.

There's beauty in machines, in chimneys, smoke,
 Red tramcars, buses, market-garden drays.
 A coloured poster's oft a lovely joke.
 The Café Royal's worth a dozen plays.
 Let Puritans and parsons have their croak,
 Here painters seek relief from toil-worn days.
 Here where the wit of Oscar flashed and glanced
 Are gathered nightly all the most advanced.

The energy that goes in talk of paint
 Around the little shining marble tables
 Is almost free from the commercial taint
 And all the common sentimental fables.
 Its patron is one John, though not the saint,
 A Hercules who's cleansed Augean stables.
 He and the Slade have caused a great upheaval
 And made Art primitive, if not primeval.

Life follows art and on the seats of plush
 Are women straight from canvas and three-ply.
 They sit and smile Johnesquely at the crush
 Of eager students waiting breathlessly
 For chatter to die down into the hush
 Which means that Art's Messiah is hard by.
 Apostles enter. That means He is coming.
 Suppressed emotion keeps the Café humming.

A great man by the silence he compels
 Is known and knows himself how great he is ;
 There's nothing else that quite so plainly tells
 Him that the public's drowsy ear is his,
 His "Yes" is the most potent of all spells,
 His "No" the key to all life's mysteries.
 He need not say a single other word.
 While he is there no other voice is heard.

This might go on for ever, were the dead
 As easily imposed on as the quick.
 An artist quite forgotten rears his head
 And shies into the silence, like a brick,
 The truth for which he suffered, fought and bled ;
 He shatters silence in the very nick
 Of time to save a good man from descending
 To homage from the semi-comprehending.

So from the fancy that in one huge leap
 Art sprang direct from Giotto to the Slade,
 The Café Royalists, as from a sleep,
 Awoke to find there'd been a sudden raid.
 From Paris, whence all subtle movements creep,
 There'd come a revolution in the trade.
 That British art was deadlier than Queen Anne
 Was proved by Gauguin, Van Gogh and Cézanne.

They had discovered that the modern world
 Was modern and that art had lagged behind
 Along with letters, morals, and the curled
 And foppish fancies of the antique mind.
 The banner of antiquity was furled
 When Cézanne's first great masterpiece was signed.
 Henceforth to find a mathematic beauty
 Became the painter's first and only duty.

The point is moot if truth half-understood
 Is better than a falsehood wholly mastered,
 And if a queer but rightly gotten brood
 Is better than a trim and shapely bastard.
 A glance at letters makes the answer good,
 For there is art with pretty lies all plastered,
 And it is dull. The painters go exploring,
 What they bring back is strange but rarely boring.

It may bewilder. Wherefore should it not?
 Is truth then so familiar to our minds
 That there is no new pleasure to be got
 When contemplation some new aspect finds?
 Are we so sure that everything is rot
 That is not known as one of two-three kinds?
 An artist's not an object of derision
 Because he loves the logic of his vision.

Old painters' logic stopped short at perspective,
 But many had no logic to stop short.
 Their vision was conventional, collective,
 And never came from what they felt or thought.
 They aimed at being thoroughly objective.
 Their work was but another kind of sport.
 They painted skies and sunsets, rivers, trees,
 With just such art as they had learned would please.

Pleasure again! The old trick of beguiling,
 Of giving sweetmeats to the soul for bread,
 Of covering cold villainy with smiling,
 Of aiming at the pocket not the head.
 With pleasure we are all bent on defiling
 The little good that's left us by the dead.
 But some small truth has crept into our paint.
 In other arts we'd try it but we mayn't.

The public spurns it for it might upset
 Our curates, virgins, householders and matrons.
 The painters are not caught within the net
 Of public pleasure, but live on their patrons.
 And therefore they are free and they are let
 Alone to follow art, and, while a spate runs,
 To use its force, to shape what they have found,
 Before the stream once more slips underground.

But all the rest who have to live by fame,
 An airy diet, got by flams and flukes,
 And carefully avoiding risk of blame,
 Are in their work like so many S. Lukes,
 All hearsay, which from first to last is tame,
 Because they dare not face old men's rebukes.
 In vain they wriggle, turn and twist and dodge.
 The public must have trifles or else stodge.

A man must please to live who lives to please.
 The old tag's trotted out with certain rules.
 The public will not think, for thought must freeze
 The warm emotions which in stagnant pools
 Lie open to the fancy's pleasant breeze.
 That's all they want. They're obstinate as mules.
 A ripple on their smooth and sluggish feeling,
 They call that beauty, light, refreshment, healing.

The favourite prescription is to mix
 Religion up with lust, to show a whore
 In nunnish garb prevailing by her tricks
 O'er chivalry which brings her back once more
 Beneath the shadow of the crucifix,
 Both being then of Heaven very sure.
 This makes the best of both the worlds and shows
 That both are softer than one might suppose.

You must not hint that marriages are not
 Invariably blissful ; that a child
 So far from being Heaven-sent was got
 By accident ; that women aren't defiled
 If they, in love, accept their woman's lot
 And go unwed ; that if a man has piled
 His money up, he may be rather worse
 Than any little thief who cuts a purse.

You may not hint that Man is still untamed,
 And will not shape his soul to outward things,
 And will not take the laws dead men have framed
 To be his world unless his spirit sings
 That here is truth, that here all unashamed
 He can unfold his wide imagined wings.
 For man in England wastes his life pretending
 His world is perfect but himself wants mending.

So down we drop from paint-encouraged vision
 To ease and cushioned mediocrity,
 Where everything is marked out with precision
 To be the kind of thing it ought to be.
 And this is reached by process of elision
 Of all that threatens soft security.
 Here men are honest, as the rich are snobs.
 For, if they were not, they would lose their jobs.

See from the suburbs every day they go,
 Black-coated, upright, worthy, stolid, smug,
 From little red-brick houses in a row,
 All neat and clean, immune from flea and bug.
 The daily paper tells them all they know
 And anxiously that little all they hug,
 Not quite believing it is all it seems,
 But right because it saves them from their dreams.

For dreams are wicked. They've a way of running
 On independent lines and bringing doubt,
 The very thing our honest man is shunning.
 For which he weaves about him and about
 Religion, morals, and a web of cunning
 To keep his soul and human nature out.
 The lack of dreams may make his life grow cold,
 But what he wants is safety when he's old.

He has a wife, although he never sought one.
 But there were girls, disturbing and attractive,
 When he was young, and then he found he'd caught one.
 And they were married. She was good and active.
 He couldn't have done better if he'd bought one.
 He'd never dream of going from the pact if
 A thousand houris for a thousand nights
 Assailed him. He insists on married rights.

He's had the family he could afford,
 A matter of the nicest calculation.
 Without disturbing his invested hoard,
 He's faced their illnesses and education ;
 He's brought them up to see in him their lord,
 Their moral pattern, type for emulation.
 He's made them swallow every moral platitude
 And mopes because they seem to fail in gratitude.

His savings are most carefully invested
 In little parcels ; much less chance of losing.
 The little devil Risk he feels he's bested
 When in the morning train he sits perusing
 The list of stocks in which he's interested
 And makes a list of others for his choosing.
 And all the while you think he's dully mooning
 His profitable stocks and shares he's pruning.

It is a triumph of the human wit
 How he'll divide and then divide again,
 Until he's built up, slowly, bit by bit,
 Another world of species wherein men
 Don't count at all except as slaves to it,
 And he himself is but a scratching pen.
 It is a world, quite empty, cold, abstract,
 The only world whose science is exact.

It is his god, exacting sacrifice
 Of courage, fun, affection, kindness, all
 The sense of good and evil, virtue, vice,
 The knowledge which Man paid for in his fall;
 All but existence is the heavy price
 For which this cruel god of his will call.
 And so, existing, cold and unforgiving,
 He rigs a scale of values for his living.

Or rather he can buy them from a church
 Or chapel by attendance regular,
 Procuring for himself a certain perch
 Above the place where wicked sinners are;
 For, having left his conscience in the lurch,
 He thinks himself God's chosen seminar.
 He can sincerely think himself religious.
 This god of his than God is more prodigious.

God who created man is nothing like
 So powerful in man's mundane affairs
 As Man's created god who'll blast and strike
 One half the human race and load with cares
 The other half and make them hack and spike
 Each other, while his priests the Bulls and Bears
 Attend, the bloodshed and the filth unheeding,
 On money's strange hermaphroditic breeding.

And England's strength is in her honest folk,
Her Bulls and Bears, her priests of Man's new god,
Himself a world to whom this world's a joke
And Man a creature better 'neath the sod,
Though given time to weep and breed and stoke
The furnaces beneath starvation's rod.
As marriage glosses joys and sins venereal,
This has its varnish Liberal-Imperial.

VI

THERE at a glance we've caught the leading lines
On which, with variations, England's built.
We've seen the aims to which her mind inclines.
The god for whom her heroes' blood was spilt.
We've seen enough to know that her designs
Upon the human race are free from guilt.
We've touched, I think, her most essential nerve
And broken down her habit of reserve.

Her pride is justified, not overweening.
In all the world there's naught like English credit.
Our statesmen's words are always full of meaning ;
You know that when they've said a thing they've said it.
None of your silly rhetorician's preening,
Which newspapers will ruthlessly sub-edit.
Our word's our bond, our bond's as good as gold,
So other countries must do what they're told.

The world's our oyster. We have had the fish.
The rest may fight and squabble for the shells.
They'll be kept busy. We shall have our wish,
And live in quiet, counting up our L's,
Our S's and our D's, and we shall dish,
As we have always done, the German swells,
Whose high ambition drives them nearly frantic
Because we stand 'twixt them and the Atlantic.

The British Empire's mistress of the seas,
 Though what that means we don't precisely know.
 We cannot do with them just as we please,
 Or say what ships thereon shall come and go.
 But if we say the moon is made of cheese,
 We'll make the world agree that it is so.
 And when we say Britannia rules the ocean,
 We'll make a show of force to back the notion.

Perhaps it is old-fashioned in these days,
 When all the nations' lives are interwoven,
 But we have found and still find that it pays,
 Until a change of living's wholly proven,
 To keep the shibboleths of our old ways
 And think the German foot is really cloven.
 The Navy's kept to see that we aren't slaves
 And looks for cloven footprints on the waves.

Without the Navy we should never know
 If we were free or not. We'd have to think
 And look into the matter. That might throw
 A light upon the things we always blink.
 And it would never do, for long ago
 We learned like squids to throw a cloud of ink
 About us when we talked of Liberty,
 Not knowing what we meant by being free.

As long as there's the Navy there's no doubt
 That we are free. The Navy guarantees it.
 The flag's the flag of freedom. Hang it out.
 The Briton knows his freedom when he sees it,
 And doesn't need to plague his wits about
 His Liberty, for thought would only freeze it.
 Without the Navy there would be no proof,
 And slavery might show its cloven hoof.

As long as there's the Navy we can keep
 Our commerce built up on the small investor.
 Democracy can safely go to sleep
 And trust the wisdom of some Jewish Nestor
 To see that swelling dividends shall creep
 To pockets wide agape in towns like Leicester
 Or Nottingham or Manchester or Leeds
 Or any place where money spawns and breeds.

As long as there's a Flag idealism
 Can find an outlet and yet not disturb
 The small investor, and no cataclysm
 Can break the spell cast by the holy verb,
 Invest. Directly there are signs of schism
 The Flag is raised and quickly puts a curb
 On human hopes, desires and aspiration
 Which might break up the concord of the nation.

For since we're all agreed on getting rich
 And paying through the nose for evidence
 Of Liberty, we can't have feelings which
 Defy the tight control of common-sense
 And cash. But they may reach a certain pitch
 In shouting for the Navy, Home Defence
 And Military Training. There's no harm
 In keeping up a tickling of alarm.

An unexcited too-well-foddered cow
 Will come to milking with an empty udder.
 A peaceful people, like the English now,
 Are all the better for a timely shudder.
 And since we simply dare not tell them how
 The ship of State's at sea without its rudder,
 Their flesh is made to tingle by the Press,
 Which talks of war and unpreparedness.

That always does the trick and we can vote
 More money for more ships and mighty guns.
 A slight mishap, a diplomatic note
 Will shadow war, and fifty millions
 Will be expended on an antidote.
 The public money through our fingers runs.
 The crisis over, papers cease their raving,
 The small investor goes on saving, saving.

He's had his bit in Kynoch's, Armstrong's, Vickers',
 And done quite well and never lost his sleep.
 He's grateful for these periodic bickers,
 Which raise the wool on his financial sheep.
 The game is worth the candle though it flickers
 Too near the powder, giving him a creep.
 He's played the game and had no accident.
 He trusts the caution of his Government.

They dare not let him know how close they shave,
 Nor that the game is just as popular
 In other countries, where the people save
 And gamble on the chances of a war,
 Imagining that they can always stave
 Disaster off by seeing that they are
 So well equipped that when they show their teeth
 The half-drawn sword will drop back in its sheath.

The Germans are a race whose innocence
 Is inconceivable and yet a fact.
 Beguiled by the success of our pretence,
 And seeing how the world has been ransacked,
 They want to do it too and set their pence
 Abreeding till another cataract
 Of wealth shall flow upon this luckless planet,
 And if it's drowned they'll say that we began it.

The things in which we only half believe
 And play with as a game, from laziness,
 Are serious to them. They cannot thieve
 Like gentlemen for fun, and our success
 Is never due to cards kept up our sleeve,
 But, as they think, to what we praise and bless
 In public—God, the Navy, work and trade,
 And industry and science, and gold braid.

Gold braid is easily procured, and God
 Has always honoured Luther's countrymen.
 If science needs a brain content to plod,
 The German is as patient as a hen.
 At sea the German has been Ichabod,
 The Hanseatic League shall live again.
 The German Empire, heir direct of Rome,
 Shall make the British anthem "Home Sweet Home."

So we were imitated but not flattered.
 The Germans held the wrong end of the stick.
 They'd disregarded everything that mattered.
 Their emulation stung us to the quick.
 By holding up the mirror, they had shattered
 Illusions which had served us through the thick
 Of half-a-century's mistakes and messes.
 It seems that half our truths were only guesses.

We haven't put the world to rights or set
 A proud example which no race can follow.
 The triumphs of the British bayonet
 Are not so solid as they seemed, but hollow.
 Our aims were Liberal and noble, yet
 In other minds we find them hard to swallow.
 We never thought the seeds of Empire sown
 By us would be to other countries blown.

We paid the Germans, paid them handsomely,
 To help put down the French when Boney tried
 To start an Empire with artillery.
 And we approved conscription to provide
 An army for our use across the sea.
 And then we flung our Empire far and wide.
 We thought that if we showed them how to do it
 The others would keep quiet and eschew it.

And now we get this horrible lampoon,
 Our mercenaries actually trading,
 And they whom Pitt & Co. fed with a spoon,
 Pretend to understand a Bill of Lading.
 We paid the piper, we should call the tune.
 Buffoonery like this is most degrading.
 To let the German have a carpet bag
 Insults our commerce and the British flag.

Put down your carpet bag and take your rifle.
 That is your job. Your only trade is war.
 With solemn things like trade you must not trifle.
 Let music keep you happy as you are.
 You sit and dream of storming the Tour Eiffel,
 Let Strauss and Wagner be your avatar.
 The sea will drown the glowing little spark
 Thrown out and blown by Moltke and Bismarck.

Meanwhile they're very useful as a scare
 To keep the British voter up to scratch.
 We'll let them be our masters in the air,
 At sea we'll be quite easily their match.
 We are an island and we do not care,
 And happy shall be Germany's despatch.
 When all is said, their Empire is ramshackle,
 And we're a toughish customer to tackle.

'They've only learned the rudiments of trade,
 The headline gospel of the red-hot Jingo.
 As soon expect from them a naval raid
 As seek along the River Thames flamingoes.
 And if you'd know the stuff whereof they're made
 Just set their beer against our good old Stingoes.
 We used to talk like that about the French.
 However, that was dropped without a wrench.

Then why not drop it now against the new
 Alarm and bogey? We have guaranteed
 The peace of Europe. We command the blue,
 And everyone but Germany's agreed
 That on the whole we do it nicely too.
 But German eagles, more like vultures, feed
 On German blood, pretending that they are
 Prohibiting the smallest chance of war.

We all love peace. That is our postulate.
 All Christians, we are prepared to spend
 On armaments, while social problems wait
 Until they can produce a dividend.
 Peace is the British Navy's precious freight.
 Peace is the German Army's noble end.
 If we are right the Germans must be wrong.
 In time they'll learn to sing another song.

And while they learn to sing it we will turn
 Our minds upon the question of Home Rule,
 A question which has almost ceased to burn,
 So potent has the Empire been to cool
 All heated points. Home Rule lies far astern.
 Between the parties we might make a pool
 And would do so but for the Tory Rump
 Who won't renounce the pleasures of the stump.

It's true, of course, that freedom is the flag,
 Or vice versa ; yet it's disconcerting
 To find in Ulster men who love the rag
 And go about ferociously asserting
 That Home Rule's freedom in a gladstone bag,
 A view from which there's no hope of converting.
 The Orangeman who hates the Catholics
 And will not trust them with his politics.

The flag of Empire waves o'er proud Belfast,
 O'er Dublin waves the lovely Irish green,
 But Ulster nails the colours to the mast ;
 And never has such love of Empire been
 As in the dauntless rebels holding fast
 And trying hard to say just what they mean.
 A Dublin lawyer helps them to be vocal
 And says that Irish politics aren't local.

Whatever Dublin is Belfast is not.
 And Dublin's hopelessly behind the times.
 Whatever riches Ireland has got
 She owes to Ulster. A. E. may make rhymes,
 And Willy Yeats may sing the bee-loud grot,
 And scrape together Yankee cents and dimes.
 But in Belfast are men who've made their pile.
 Their money is on Empire all the while.

Belfast builds ships and there's no Irish navy—
 And never will be one—no Irish coal.
 Home Rule will be roast beef without the gravy,
 A gross and pompous body with no soul.
 Belfast will not be treated like a slavey
 And given notice. Ireland as a whole
 May be content to like it or to lump it,
 But Ulster is the British Empire's trumpet.

And so at last we see the Tories working
 To show that they and they alone can cry
 The Empire as it should be cried, not shirking
 The issue, as the Liberals, who try
 To be Imperial but can't help burking
 The mandate laid on Empire from on high.
 From Ulster's trumpet comes a mighty blast.
 The Tories have a battle-cry at last.

They have the Army on their side and find
 That Britain hardly knew it had one till
 Its disaffection served to call to mind
 The fact that it was there, well trained to kill,
 Although its oath could not be held to bind
 Against the loyal rebels whose firm will
 Would never bend the knee to such dictators
 As Mr Asquith and his gang of traitors.

They weren't Imperial enough, they'd sold
 The country time and time again to keep
 Themselves in place, their betters in the cold.
 They seemed to think the Irish were like sheep
 To be penned up for shearing in a fold.
 But Ulster would rouse Britain from her sleep
 And show her, though the process might be gory,
 The road to Empire by the path of glory.

Retired colonels looked up army manuals
 And got their wives to furbish up their kit.
 They blossomed out like healthy hardy annuals.
 They drilled the Orangemen to do their bit.
 There was no lack of newspaper Emmanuels
 To show that they had such a candle lit
 As would not be put out for generations,
 In spite of Dublin's wicked machinations.

In London this great patriotic rally
 Produced some small sensation, very small
 Compared with that aroused by Russian Ballet,
 Or some great masquerade at Albert Hall,
 Or Mdle Deslys becoming pally
 With J. M. Barrie at whose party all
 Society was kinematographed
 And in a way ticked off and epitaphed.

The Cabinet could easily outwit
 This last ingenious and bold finesse.
 They held the cards and could well wait a bit
 And let the Tories have their fancy-dress
 And martial games. The country laughed at it
 And thought it was concocted by the Press.
 Devotion to the Empire in Belfast
 Was far too good a joke for it to last.

And yet somehow the country was impressed.
 The Tories had not altogether failed.
 The country felt once more that it possessed
 An Empire, and that Empire still entailed
 A flag, a fleet, an army and the rest
 As in the works of Kipling they're regaled.
 The Empire felt the Tories' bold manœuvre
 From Wellington N.Z. to far Vancouver.

Lo! then the Empire in the hour of danger
 With civil war almost accomplished fact,
 The soul of Empire, not by any stranger
 But by the Government had been attacked.
 The Tory dog, still snarling in its manger,
 Was half-astonished that it was not smacked.
 But no one smacked it. Liberals were busy
 In learning Empire to out-Dizzy Dizzy.

Hark ! how the heart of Empire thumps and knocks.
The Liberals, determined to outdo
The Tory's Ulster pageant, crow like cocks
And say that they have brilliant plumage too.
The feast demands a sacrificial ox,
Some costly show, a grand Spithead review.
The bluff decried as actor-managerial,
Is nothing to the Liberal-Imperial.

VII

BUT while the fleets to Spithead steamed, consuming
A million tons of most expensive coal,
And while King Carson in Belfast was fuming
And keeping up his complicated rôle,
The meagre shadow of King Death came looming
And took an Austrian Archduke in toll.
The contact of this Prince with the unseen
Produced the spark to fire the magazine.

The painted structure of the Jingo powers
Was soon alight and fast burned to the ground,
And peaceful talk in copious fine showers
Was poured upon the charred and steaming mound ;
Yet in a few enraged and fevered hours
An outlet for the people's rage was found.
Before they saw how they had all been cheated
Their reason was by talk of war unseated.

The ships and guns and engines of their pride
Were used at last upon trumped-up excuses.
The clamour of the war was made to hide
The fact that all the old well-worn abuses
Of feudal days were kept to over-ride
Democracy and its more decent uses.
The bubble of our European swagger
Was pricked by some obscure assassin's dagger.

The White Books, Green Books, Yellow Books and Red
 Give the excuses and the base events
 That led to Europe's manhood being bled
 To find out who's to blame. Young innocents
 By millions must be tortured, left for dead,
 Or blown to bits, because their Governments
 Had found it pay to bluster about peace
 And keep their ships and guns on the increase.

Their Governments had burned the candle at
 Both ends and some had burned it in the middle
 To have four ends to burn. Small wonder that
 When Europe was on fire they played the fiddle.
 They'd no more rabbits in the magic hat.
 They'd lost the answer to their pointless riddle.
 The peace their armed display had guaranteed
 Was proved to be a wretched broken reed.

The rest is history. For broken toys
 Called Empires and the trebly sacred right
 To sacrifice and crush the dearest joys
 Of human nature, we are in this plight.
 The human mind its hard-won skill employs
 In murder and the spread of dreadful night.
 And darker night and murder yet more grim
 Creep o'er the world where hope grows faint and dim.

There are some self-important fools who call
 This living, and they rub their hands, delighted
 To be observed as bearers of the pall
 That covers life. Because they're more excited
 The life they knew is bitterness and gall
 To them. They live in hopes of being knighted
 For services (well paid) in making guns
 And ammunition to mow down the Huns.

The Huns have been mowed down. So have the French.
 So have the English and the Russians, but
 There's nothing come of it but one long trench
 From Flanders to the Vosges, another cut
 From Poland to the Baltic. There's a stench,
 A plague of flies, a brand-new type of knut,
 Great grief and broken hearts, and shattered cities,
 And soldiers singing barrel-organ ditties.

And there are men with less luck than the dead
 Sent home without their legs, or arms, or hands,
 And paid for life enough to keep them fed,
 Just out of hunger's reach. The country stands
 By all its heroes. They shall all have bread,
 If nothing else. We meet the just demands
 Of charity. We'll see that no one's starved
 Who's had his power of work destroyed or halved.

We're proud of them and sorry they are mangled,
 But this is war and well worth such a price.
 The world is purged. Its luxury is strangled,
 Its lewdness clean cut out, its mortal vice
 Dissolved in blood and tears, and all new-fangled
 And troublesome ideas combed like lice.
 So these excited persons say. They revel
 In seeing life brought to its lowest level.

For there such fools can hope to understand it.
 It is no longer hard for them. It seems
 To fall out just as though they'd made and planned it.
 There's money in their pockets. Foolish dreams
 Of freedom's flame, the lunatics who fanned it,
 Are all put out like yesternight's moonbeams.
 Of dead men's mortal prowess they will boast
 While middle age is left to rule the roast.

A righteous war, for it was no one's will.
 We say it was the Germans: they to us
 A scornful finger point, but have their fill
 Of loot and lust and bloodshed. Aedipus
 Himself was not more horrified to kill
 Or slaughtered with a gentler animus.
 "I didn't want to do it," runs the song,
 And so we sing as War sweeps us along.

And no one wants to do it, yet it's done,
 Because we're all too terrified to stop.
 Like trippers on a tour of Dr Lunn
 We've got to see it through until we drop.
 The Germans want a playground in the sun;
 We want the British Navy still on top.
 Yet both ambitions could be satisfied
 And neither would be wounded in their pride.

Because the Germans want to bask and lie
 Like turtles on some hot fantastic shore,
 There seems no reason why young men should die,
 Because the British nation still sets store
 On having ships which no one may defy,
 Along the coast from Plymouth to the Nore,
 It seems absurd that in the Dardanelles
 Young Turks should be mopped up with Lyddite shells.

Because the Russians want to carry grain,
 Which Europe badly needs, from Black Sea ports,
 It seems grotesque that Hindus should be slain,
 And Belgians have huge guns blow up their forts.
 Yet, having once got war upon the brain,
 It seems to some the noblest of all sports.
 They'll kill with just the same disgusted zest
 As fills a farmer blotting out a pest.

Why look for reason when the world is mad ?
 Some nobly mad and others mad with lust
 And vile excitement, feeling half gone bad
 From long suppression, vigour gone to rust,
 Emotions crude as colours in a plaid.
 Some few hold reason as the dearest trust,
 And cherish it, the key to liberty
 Wherewith imagination sets men free.

Divine imagination ! how denied,
 Abused and mocked thou art, how set at naught
 And sacrificed by men to fear and pride !
 Denying thee who never hast been bought,
 They seek revenge. Themselves are crucified.
 The meshes set for thee, themselves have caught.
 Still art thou free, still labouring to make
 A Heaven of whose joy all may partake.

Yet who shall heed thee ? None, I fear, except
 And if thou wilt engage and guarantee
 To give one pound a week to all who've crept
 Forth from the womb to the obscurity
 Of human life, controlled by the inept,
 Conceited and cocksure plutocracy.
 If thou, Imagination, wilt provide
 A living wage, then all are on thy side.

There is the rub ! That men must live and pay
 For rent and food and clothes and boots and drink,
 Insurance and their clubs on Saturday.
 And, till they've paid, they have no time to think.
 So cunning folk have always had their way,
 And seen to it that poorer men should sink
 To half-starvation, overworked, in debt,
 With just enough intelligence to bet.

From that to military discipline,
 With no responsibility, free food,
 And clothes and boots, a little cash thrown in,
 No women, open air, no time to brood,
 The change at first must seem as though some djinn
 Had touched the evil world and made it good.
 The end of all is filth and blood and death,
 But they've had time to draw one living breath.

We're born in filth and blood and all must die.
 What does it matter how or when we do it?
 We're told it's all to serve some purpose high,
 And those who told us spoke as though they knew it.
 And after all, what matter if they lie?
 They've bit this war off. We have got to chew it.
 We've tasted worse in peace, had less to eat,
 And this compared with that is quite a treat.

We're out from factory and den and mine,
 From slums and little houses in a row,
 From garish shops and stores. The air like wine,
 Like sweet new wine, makes heart and pulses go,
 And instincts bristle like a porcupine,
 And thoughts like clouds come, lumbering and slow,
 Across the sky, that never seemed so near,
 So like a roof to cover all things here.

We've seen the day go by from dawn to dark.
 There seems some sense in it, as if the sun
 Some purpose had, and knew the singing lark.
 The birds and beasts and all the jolly fun
 That lives in fields, were there for him to mark
 And count them up like Noah one by one.
 We've crawled upon our bellies in the loam.
 The smell of it was like the smell of home.

We've seen the seasons pass and in their motion
 There is an ordered dignity and power
 The like of which is in no human notion
 And yet is in the smallest hedgerow flower,
 Whose life is simple musical devotion
 A-trembling up to its ecstatic hour.
 We and the stars have slyly winked together
 To see the passing of the dirty weather.

We've had the rain and mud upon our skins,
 And frost into our very bones has bitten
 And frozen up our little store of sins.
 Our quondam pleasures into ice are smitten.
 It hardly seems to matter which side wins.
 That's all a part of what the scribes have written.
 They've lost the sense, born in the touch of earth,
 That knows how life is ever big with birth.

The rich men come and go and make a rattle,
 And generals are clad in red and gold,
 But so in sunlight is a herd of cattle,
 And sheep are golden in a Sussex fold,
 And mating birds don't need the sound of battle
 To make them proud, magnificent and bold.
 Enough for them that there is life and beauty.
 They do not know or need another duty.

There has been death, a going to the earth,
 Unblessed, unconsecrated, unprepared,
 A dying of the melancholy dearth
 Of Love wherein humanity is snared.
 Yet earth's renewed, unfathomable mirth
 Sang through the living as they deathward fared.
 The heart of knowledge in their hearts again
 Made life so sweet that dying is in vain.

Where's your pretences now, your fabled glory,
 Your monied liberty whose foolish light
 But flickered through a dull old woman's story
 Of narrow good and evil, wrong and right,
 Of Church and State and Liberal and Tory
 Whose slavery with wages cast a blight
 Upon all human life, that men forgot,
 And tolerated their inhuman lot ?

Where is your gold ? Thrown out upon the wind
 With precious lives, a thin blue trail of smoke
 That curls and writhes, until upon the mind
 Is etched a vision serpentine to cloak
 The clearer vision that shall free mankind
 And cast aside their bitter burning yoke.
 The smoke still trails, still darkening their eyes
 That ache to see and peer up in the skies.

A blind man tapping through a burning town,
 Not seeing how it casts a splendid glare
 Upon the sky, a golden russet brown,
 Of danger through his nostrils well aware,
 Turns as a huge rich house comes toppling down
 And faces it with vacant, frosty stare.
 He feels the thrill of terror in the crowd,
 And knows their thoughts as though they thought aloud.

The soul of man, whose eyes have been plucked out
 Lest they should see too much, walks sniffing so.
 The fabric of his mind is gutted out
 And very soon its massive walls will go.
 And round the conflagration and about
 Are men and women spell-bound by the glow.
 They stand there huddled, gaping and obscene,
 Forgetting all the greatness there has been.

They watch the sparks fly upward. There are priests
 Among them who remind them how they too
 Are born to sorrow and, unlike the beasts,
 Fly upward, if to Church and God they're true.
 And there are thieves to whom such crowds are feasts,
 Wherein the god of stealing has his due.
 And many thieves authority will ape,
 And pick the people's pockets while they gape.

And there are quacks who sell in printed sheets
 Elaborate accounts of how the burning
 Goes east to west, then in the middle meets
 Another flare, goes west to east, then, turning,
 Goes north to south, and then again repeats
 Its first great sweep. And, with a show of learning
 These quacks will draw a simple diagram
 As cabalistic as the Crab or Ram.

And there are other quacks who undertake
 To put the burning out, if they are paid
 Enough. With high explosives then they slake
 The flames and soon they ply a roaring trade.
 And half the crowd they soon induce to make
 More high explosives, while other some are made
 To carry them into the fiercest heat,
 Returning whence, they're worshipped for the feat.

And soon the throng, half mad with fright and lust
 For added terrors, and the frenzied glee
 Of bringing outworn splendours to the dust,
 Turns on itself and whips up enmity
 And savage fury, till they break the crust
 Of habit and set beastly passions free.
 The throng now flares and flickers like the blaze.
 All hope, all life they set about to raze.

And strangely for this work they will submit
 To order and an iron discipline.
 In regiments and armies they are knit,
 And disobedience is mortal sin.
 Of every other thought and aim they're quit
 And wait the word their horror to begin.
 All life they cast aside and keep the lees.
 In lapping blood and filth they find their ease.

And as the flames consume their outward show,
 So terror burns them inwardly to ashes.
 There is no wind of thought to raise a glow,
 No pity tends their bleeding wounds and gashes.
 They trample men and women as they go.
 White skins are spotted o'er with bloody splashes.
 They catch or crush all in their mad career,
 Voluptuously screaming in their fear.

Hypocrisy is honoured as their lord,
 Who gives them gods and high time-honoured causes
 For which they can pretend to draw the sword
 And burn and wreck, and when the frenzy pauses
 Demand that all shall be of one accord
 And sign the self-same false and lying clauses,
 To prove this vileness done for Freedom's charter
 And grant the dead the honour of a martyr.

Hypocrisy itself cannot control
 Their fury, and hypocrisy's devices
 Are trampled down and nothing is left whole
 Except a few primeval human vices.
 These are allowed to play their ancient rôle,
 The serpent who seduces and entices.
 All else is swept into the holocaust,
 The human mind they ransack and exhaust.

And when they grow accustomed to their fear
 'Tis all done cheerfully and almost lightly.
 Their horror seems to lose its power to sear
 And they are used to all their foul unsightly
 Abominations, though they still seem queer,
 And there are rules to see that they're done rightly.
 Now shuddering, the blinded soul refuses
 To share one moment more and seeks the Muses.

Out of the glare, out of the mortal din
 He gropes his way to unpolluted air.
 He washes out the memory of sin
 In peaceful streams and starting from its lair
 Imagination seeks therewith to win,
 In spite of all the dangers he must dare,
 His way to that sweet flower-dappled hill
 Whereon the Muses magic arts distil.

There he will crave that they upon his eyes.
 Shall lay some juices rare to heal his sight,
 That once again sweet visions may arise
 And beckon him to taste true love's delight,
 Deep penetrating love that laughs at lies
 As insects born to perish in the night.
 So while mankind is caught in lust and rage
 The soul sets out on happy pilgrimage.

The world's well lost and hardly worth a sigh
 Save that its end has been so dearly bought.
 The bravest men have been condemned to die
 And taken with them all they might have thought
 And felt and done. Their lives have been thrown by
 Before they could discover what they sought.
 Not death but men were merciless and cruel
 To use their lives so wantonly as fuel.

All is laid waste, the good and bad together.
 The good went first, a willing sacrifice,
 A sweet meek beast there was no need to tether.
 The bad still stood and bargained for its price,
 Still hoping it were possible to weather
 The storm by some ingenious device.
 But even the most subtle hypocrite
 Could find no way of keeping out of it.

For all must see their dearly hoarded treasure,
 The sweet unquestioned goods of yesterday,
 Go down before the Procrustean measure
 That values all but as it fits the play
 Of evil forces sweeping at their pleasure
 The gods and men and governments away.
 And so with accents properly funereal
 We ope our epic Liberal-Imperial.

CANTO ONE

CANTO I

My hero's name is Higgins, though for that
He is no less a hero than Tom Jones,
No less a shining peak above the flat
And smoky waste where human nature groans
And moans and mopes while Care, who killed the cat,
Creeps like an ague through men's aching bones.
His Christian names are James Mulready Noel,
Born in the land of Eckstein, Beit and Joel.

How strange that anything so innocent
As children should be gotten in a land
Where men on gold and gain are so intent
That human life is but as dust or sand
To trickle through their fingers! Still the bent
Of men and women living on the Rand
Is much the same as elsewhere and they get
Themselves tied up in procreation's net.

His father was a cad of gentle birth,
More caddish therefore than a low-bred cur.
His mother was the gentlest soul on earth,
And Noel had his qualities from her :
His charm, his force, his never-failing mirth
Which bubbles through his story sinister,
Whose golden thread illumines this narration
Of Glory, Empire and the British Nation.

His mother's history is too, too sad,
 For she was married to a clergyman
 And did not like him, but preferred the bad,
 Bold Guardsman, Henry Higgins, and they ran
 Away together, being both half mad
 With love and reckless of the cruel ban
 Which England lays upon illicit lovers,
 On those at least whom recklessness discovers.

It was not Henry's first experience,
 Though it was hers, and she was in revolt
 And ran him off his legs, to the intense
 And frigid horror of that frisky colt,
 Who had till then been reined by common-sense.
 Love shot his dart and Ellen shot her bolt,
 And found herself divorced and isolated
 With Henry Higgins, whom she shortly hated.

But for my hero's sake they went before
 The registrar and made his birth legitimate,
 And said good-bye to England's chalk-white shore.
 And Henry found he had a shrewd and witty mate,
 While Ellen saw in him a fearful bore,
 An even more unkind and gritty mate
 Than he whom she had left to weep and rage
 In his dull, damp and dingy parsonage.

Such tragedies are common and produce
 Not seldom heroes, since the woman throws
 The thwarted passion which has broken loose
 Into the bearing of her child. She goes
 Unmated, but in this she finds her use,
 Her aim, her end, the deepest truth she knows.
 Such births are virgin, for the carnal act
 Has left the maiden spirit quite intact.

Expelled by Church and State, the couple fled
 To Africa, that refuge of the wrecked.
 Their kinsfolk calmly thought of them as dead
 And said: "What else could anyone expect? . . ."
 And: "As they've made so they must lie their bed . . ."
 Etcetera. Such phrases disinfect
 The families of couples who disown
 The moral chains which cut them to the bone.

Of course it turned out badly, though no worse
 Than ninety-five per cent. of marriages.
 For marriage is the pompous pluméd hearse,
 Wherein Love's corpse through life escorted is:
 Dead love, dead hope, dead men and women curse,
 Yet still support this worst of tragedies,
 In double harness bearing to the grave
 The long-dead love they have no power to save.

Some people think of multi-millionaires
 As men endowed with brains beyond the norm,
 And iron wills to thrust aside the cares
 Of common life and free their limbs to storm
 The citadel of Fate and climb the stairs
 Of Fame themselves with power to inform.
 But millionaires are after all but human,
 Dependent like the rest on pleasing Woman.

The part that Woman plays in I.D.B.,
 In I.G.B. and in illicit liquor
 Would horrify the innocents who see
 In Empire proof that blood is always thicker
 Than water and are blind to villainy
 Which uses blood as a cement or sticker.
 The origins of fortunes oft are shady.
Cherchez la femme. Anglicé: Seek the lady.

So Henry Higgins found when on the Rand
 He sought his broken fortunes to repair.
 And he a stranger in a foreign land
 Had more temptation than his soul could bear.
 With so much easy villainy to hand,
 He could not help but take his dirty share.
 His Ellen suffered but could not prevent
 Her Guardsman from a headlong swift descent.

Great days were those when Englishmen and Jews
 Were out to diddle Dutchmen and the niggers,
 When heroes from the ghettos and the stews
 Of Europe did such sleight of hand with figures
 That simple men were almost glad to lose
 Their all and let the frenzied swarm of diggers
 Destroy old homesteads, farms and cherished places
 And flood them with the scum of all the races.

Great days indeed, when Jews and Englishmen
 Bought, cheated, gambled, swindled, filched, decoyed,
 Riggd, salted, boomed, defaulted now and then,
 And bragged and blustered and were quite annoyed,
 Quite seriously agitated, when
 The Dutch Republics legal rights employed
 To keep their lands from being all devoured,
 Their simple folk from being overpowered.

Plunged in this welter, Henry wholly lost
 His moral code and soon up to the neck
 Was plunged in tricks which acted like a frost
 Upon his marriage. Soon he was a wreck,
 And sold himself at something less than cost
 Unto a Jew and lived upon his beck
 And nod, which meant his henceforth dealing
 In what at home he would have loathed as stealing.

But British morals never stand transplanting.
 What's wrong at home is quite all right abroad.
 The British race apparently is wanting
 In critical intelligence and floored
 Are other races whose oblique and slanting
 Wits wake to find their claims and rights ignored.
 This happened with the Dutch, whose simple piety
 Could never cope with Anglo-Yid society.

The part that Henry played in gobbling up
 The two Republics must remain ambiguous.
 'Tis certain that he filled his Ellen's cup
 With bitterness. Her love grew more exiguous.
 In fact, of love she had nor bite nor sup
 Once Henry Higgins learned to thimblorig, you, us,
 Posterity and God's great self to swindle,
 The British patriotic fire to kindle.

Enough! My hero knew naught of the welter
 Of roguery that sent up Dr Jim
 To rush the Rand and drive out helter-skelter
 Oom Paul and those who tolerated him,
 And naught of those who cravenly took shelter
 When London vetoed Cecil Rhodes' whim.
 My hero never realised till later
 How he had played by a volcano's crater.

Like Goethe Noel had his Frohnatur
 Vom Mütterchen. O! rarely can a child
 Have had so very little to endure
 As he from her who let his soul grow wild
 And know no stint that he might be so pure
 As never by the world to be defiled.
 For Ellen knew that if a soul is free
 It flies its way unharmed through misery.

She let him find his feet in everything,
 And neither scolded nor gave too much aid,
 But answered questions frankly when the sting
 Of curiosity his childhood frayed.
 She suffered when the boy in him took wing
 And childish things and fancies down he laid.
 She suffered when the man began to grope
 Through boyhood, menacing her every hope.

She suffered when his nerves began to ache
 For maiden comfort and the exquisite
 Delight of living for another's sake.
 She suffered when he was ashamed of it,
 And vowed he never, never would partake
 Of joys that did not them more closely knit.
 She took all risks in utter confidence
 That joy's a surer guide than common-sense.

She let him have his joy ; that was her rule ;
 His joy in all things good and bad, and taught him
 Himself to judge the things he learned at school,
 And doing so continually brought him
 To disbelieve in things that any fool
 Would see through if the system had not caught him.
 He quickly learned the things he wished to know,
 But things he did not wish he just let go.

She let him have his joy and he increased it
 A thousandfold and hers by increment.
 His life was freehold and he never leased it,
 But gave it freely to the innocent,
 And by the giving found he had released it
 From all the weight of moral argument.
 "It's only Noel," greeted all his actions.
 His very lapses seemed like benefactions.

So wonderful is Grace. No moral code
 Can thwart it, nor no punishment defame
 Its power to turn the human sinner's road
 Into a flowered path, a field aflame
 With poppies of oblivion. The goad
 Of conscience and the knotted whips of shame
 Are useless where true Grace has touched the mind
 And given sight to eyes that else are blind.

So Ellen let her son loose like a colt,
 To find himself the uses of his limbs
 And mind and soul and organs, that revolt
 Might never drive him into frenzied whims
 As it had driven her to shoot her bolt
 Against the Church, the Prayer Book and the hymns
 Interminable, blasphemous and dreary
 Of which she had been heart-sick and dog-weary.

She never talked of England save to tell
 How it was beautiful beyond all other places,
 And of the valley underneath Ill Bell
 Where she had dreamed in girlhood of the faces
 Would live around her in the lovely spell
 Of happiness and love. She marked her traces
 Through all the rich and varied island scene
 And pondered wistfully what might have been.

She talked of Cambridge and the haunted Backs
 Where ancient trees keep centuries alive,
 Of Sussex downs where nut-brown shepherds wax
 In years and seem the only men to thrive
 As men once throve before their wretched backs
 Were burdened with the weight of the great hive
 Of industry created in the island
 So wet with tears that it's no longer dry land.

She talked of Thames and Severn and the Avon,
 And Shakespeare's town and Shakespeare's lovely work,
 Of Ayr and Burns, and country-sides all paven
 With poets' thoughts, bright flowers in the murk,
 Of beauty so indelibly engraven
 On England that the English vainly shirk.
 For Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats and Byron
 Defy the inroads of the age of iron.

She talked of Turner, Constable and Crome
 And all the beauty captured by their art,
 To show how Englishmen defile their home
 And every day betray it in the mart.
 Through memories of beauty she would roam,
 To bring her son into her inmost heart.
 Her memories and fancies were most free
 When she remembered places by the sea.

The salted marshes of the Kentish coast,
 The Cornish cliffs, the sands of Robin's Bay,
 Clovelly brought a still entrancing host
 Of memories as it were yesterday.
 These sea-bird thoughts were ever Ellen's most
 Belovèd, and to think them was to pray.
 These were her England, these she laid before
 Her son and wisely told him nothing more.

The history of England is the sea.
 Kings, statesmen, priests and soldiers disappear.
 The waves creep up out of the mystery
 Of sea and sky, and men are born to peer
 Into that mystery, and seek the key
 In vain, as each wave asks its human tear.
 The hungry waves creep up and slowly break,
 While hearts with stale and unlived living ache.

The history of England is the sea,
 That drenches all save the poetic fire
 That is unquenchable, and burning free
 Sends through the English soul a fierce desire,
 The equal of the sun's, for liberty,
 Creation and the music of the choir
 Of all the spheres, the music universal
 Whereof this world is but the first rehearsal.

So this was England to my hero, just
 A dream of sea and ships and soft green dells,
 And nothing learned he of the filthy crust
 Of smoke and money and the divers hells
 That thicken it until the English must
 Destroy or be destroyed to keep the swells
 Who run the Anglo-Yiddish Empire fattened,
 And every other kind of creature flattened.

In hot parched Africa to think in dreams
 Of fat rich meadows, countless running rills,
 Green woods, slow rivers, waving grass that teems
 With chirping life, and rolling turfy hills!
 In such a heat as yonder England seems
 A Paradise that satisfies and fills
 The inmost longing of the exiled soul
 That quite forgets that England's black with coal.

So Noel dreamed of England, where his sires
 Had loved the scenes of which his mother told,
 Had stamped their character upon the shires
 Where they had lived, had won in days of old
 The honourable title of Esquires,
 And looked for honour rather than for gold.
 Such tales as these made it seem rather funny
 To Noel that his father crawled to money.

Now money in the person of the Beits,
 Barnatos, Rhodes and persons of that kind
 Was chivalrously asking for the rights
 Of citizens for Britons come to find
 A living 'mid the riotous delights
 Of Jo'burg—or perhaps 'twas but a blind
 To Anglicise the Rand and make suburban
 The continent from Salisbury to Durban.

About the whole intrigue as usual
 The Muse of History has gravely lied,
 Suppressing all the more sensational
 And vulgar details lest our British pride
 Should suffer. When the Muse has quibbled shall
 The poet on the naked truth decide?
 If gold is wanted for the British Mint,
 Then poets like the Muses learn to squint.

Enough to say that Rhodes and Beit & Co.,
 With fortunes based on smuggling from the mines
 Through Kafir ladies, wanted more and so
 Began to work and scheme along the lines
 Laid down long since for men who wish to go
 To war to plunder Naboth of his vines.
 And it so happened that in England cartridges
 Were made too quick for pheasants, grouse and partridges.

When cartridges are made too fast for birds
 And beasts, and shareholders want markets, then,
 When they can no more be fobbed off with words,
 Such ammunition can be used on men.
 What men? The Foreign Secretary girds
 His loins and marks the quarry with his pen.
 Then some small nation is accused of knavery
 And branded as the champion of slavery.

It generally happens that they own
 Rich mines or oils or cocoanuts, but that
 Is incidental, just a makeweight thrown
 Into the scales of justice. What we're at,
 We British, is to force the Freedom grown
 In England on the proletariat
 Of every other country, so that they
 May help the costs of Empire to defray.

The Beits had costly houses in Park Lane.
 (That they were Germans did not matter then.)
 That Boers should slight them went against the grain
 Of British pride. The Boers then were the men
 Marked down by Kynoch's products to be slain
 With sanction voted underneath Big Ben.
 Shall it be said that Britain's grand democracy
 Will not defend its Yiddish aristocracy?

But nothing knew my hero of the coil
 In which his father and the British were entangled.
 He never let his elders' folly spoil
 The dreams of youth, with starry splendour spangled,
 That held him rapt. So while the Hebrews toil
 To have the Dutch republics smashed and mangled
 He toils to please the object of his calf love
 Whom he could only miserably half love.

A very young man thinks that women are
 As lovely as the feelings they awaken.
 For as a poet gazing on a star
 Can dream a world, so youthful hearts when shaken
 By puberty are wonderfully far
 From thinking they are possibly mistaken.
 When Noel wished to know how women are made
 He wasted his first love upon a barmaid.

He loved her truly but was horrified
 When she proposed that he should give her what
 She coveted, a night spent by his side.
 The mere suggestion made his forehead hot,
 And when 'twas done he thought of suicide
 To make an end of his most wretched lot.
 It tortured him to think he had defiled
 Her. When he told her of it she was riled.

She shrieked with laughter and he hotly fled,
 Pursued with raucous titters of derision,
 And wept to see this first love lying dead,
 His love that had been as a vivid vision.
 It left him with a fiercely aching head,
 A soul that ached and twinged with indecision.
 He rode until he reached a river's brim.
 There would he drown. He had a jolly swim.

His second love is not worth mentioning.
 His third, a Dutch girl, gave him even more
 Than he could dream and he felt like a king,
 Like Fortinbras arrived in Elsinore.
 This girl was musical and she could sing
 The operas of Wagner *sans* the score.
 This may account for more than one romantic
 Adventure which may seem extreme and antic.

They loved and loved so ardently and well
 That Love was Noel's only education.
 In terms of love he saw the miracle
 Of life, the endless fierce creation
 Of worlds sent spinning dizzily to hell,
 World after world with no hope of cessation.
 But sunlight, earth and love were quite enow,
 With pleasure at the helm, youth at the prow.

And incidentally my hero learned
 How Englishmen and Jews had squeezed the Dutch
 Wherever gold and diamonds were upturned.
 How they had given little for the much
 They coveted : how British troops had burned
 And sacked and raped that British hands might touch
 And make Imperial the golden soil
 On which the Dutchmen wasted all their toil.

Where Dutchmen cultivated corn and mealies
 And vines and peaches, oranges and nuts,
 Are mines and dumps, and men with whom to steal is
 Just Business, which the door on morals shuts.
 And the result of every British deal is
 Just money—the unkindest of all cuts—
 Instead of peace and happiness and work :
 Just money and the moneyed right to shirk.

And bitter tales had Noel's love to make him
 Almost ashamed to be of British birth,
 And yet she could not altogether shake him
 In his belief that nowhere on this earth
 Was such a land as England, and to wake him
 Was impossible when he avowed the worth
 Of British dreams and poetry and history.
 He tried in vain to make her love that mystery.

In vain. Katrina only knew the worst,
 The greed, the callous lust for gold and power.
 And she believed her people to be curst
 Because in an unhappy, careless hour
 They had agreed to slake the British thirst
 For land, and let them have the very flower
 Of Africa's "illimitable veldt"
 In their Imperial crucible to melt.

And she believed a curse was on her folk
 Because the mines had disinterred the dead.
 For that, she said, they well deserved the yoke
 Of slavery descending on the head
 Of every Boer, and when the storm-cloud broke
 She prophesied that England would be bled
 A thousandfold for every corpse disturbed
 Before the vengeance of the dead was curbed.

This talk of curses gave a tragic twist
 To love that was idyllically young,
 Most rare, most beautiful. Had Noel wist
 How it would end he might perhaps have sung
 Less boyishly his love, and might have kissed
 More deeply had he known how Katje clung
 To this which was the passion of her life.
 He was her husband. She was not his wife.

She knew it, but was kind and never told him,
 Nor ever made a murmur of complaint.
 His childishness annoyed her, but to scold him
 Was beyond her, though she must sometimes feint
 And dodge his foolish ardour, when to hold him
 Was hard enough to aggravate a saint.
 He loved her, but was maddeningly blind
 To all the deeper movements of her mind.

And loving her he learned to love the land
 That bred her with its hot and zestful air,
 Its mystery that lies on every hand
 Absorbing all and making all things wear
 A passionate aspect. To understand
 The love which he was wonted to declare
 So easily, our hero had to shed
 The British prejudice in him inbred.

That was Katrina's task, and she set to it
 As though her life depended, as indeed
 It did, upon her power to win through it
 Before the storm she felt made nations bleed.
 She broke in Noel, though he never knew it,
 The fear which is the source of British greed,
 The fear of giving anything away
 For fear of what the next-door neighbours say.

For it is far, far better to be rich
 Than good, but it is better to be good
 Than poor. There is the moral basis which
 Upholds the Empire and is understood
 So perfectly by those who strive to hitch
 New countries on, who, losing nationhood,
 Are told that they have gained in liberty—
 A statement which they do not always see.

Katrina understood it not at all
 And took good care that Noel should not either,
 For she believed in riding for a fall.
 When she must choose she wanted both or neither.
 She wanted Noel, wanted to forestall
 The sufferings which he must soon bequeath her,
 By waking in him some more rare capacity
 Than is required by unalloyed rapacity.

And she succeeded marvellously well,
 So well that he had not the faintest tinge
 Of British morals left in him. The knell
 Was sounded of those terrors that impinge
 Upon the Briton's mind when feelings swell
 His manly bosom, threatening t'unhinge
 The lid which on emotion he has jammed
 To make quite sure that he shall ne'er be damned.

So for a while Katrina had her way
 And Noel learned the height and depth of passion
 As it can live in maidens who don't play
 With love, but go all out in reckless fashion
 And nothing care for what they have to pay.
 She taught him that it's better far to dash on
 And get the thing you want than to postpone
 And lose the chance of making love your own.

For in a moving world true safety lies
 In movement. There is nothing to be gained
 By standing still and hoping that a prize
 Will heave in sight and haply be retained.
 Katrina knew this and her Noel's eyes
 She opened to her passion unrestrained.
 And her delight in him was only heightened
 To know that he was not the least bit frightened.

They loved and no one knew that they had tasted
 Love's deepest joys. They loved and no one knew
 That not a drop of their fine youth was wasted,
 For all had gone to make the world anew.
 Life seemed so short. They rode the wind and hasted
 To overtake the white clouds as they flew.
 Among the stars at night they raced delighted
 And sipped the honey of each moon they sighted.

Young love has wings. Young love on music rises
 And leaves the world to go on growing old,
 And men and women changing their disguises
 And trying to forget that they are cold,
 Worn out and bored and dead to the surprises
 That mock the world where all is bought and sold.
 Young Love in Noel and Katrina made
 Them welcome even the great price they paid.

The price was heavy, for her father, who
 For years had been engaged in running guns
 From Delagoa Bay, surprised the two
 Like Candide and his Cunegonde. His sons
 He called, great giants, who then took and threw
 Young Noel out as children throw their buns
 To bears in Zoos, and left him stunned and lying
 Half dead with grief to hear Katrina crying.

He crept away, but waited through the night,
 And in the dawn she came to him and said
 Her brothers were prepared to shoot at sight,
 If he should ever show his British head
 Upon their land, for they were in a fright
 Lest he should spy and peep into the shed
 Where guns and shells and rounds of ammunition
 Were stored while Rhodes manœuvred for position.

Her father and her brothers knew the part
 That Noel's father, Henry Higgins, played
 In seeing that Oom Paul was in the cart
 In spite of his defeat of Jameson's Raid.
 That being so, although it wrenched her heart,
 She thought it best to see that Noel stayed
 Away from her, and they arranged to meet
 By stealth sometimes at Jo'burg in the street.

Hearts nearly broke when suddenly there came
 The news that war had been declared. The spark
 Fell on the land, and soon the rushing flame
 Burned fiercely, and its smoke made life grow dark,
 All hope grow dim and dwindle into shame.
 The British took to arms just for a lark,
 But for the Dutch 'twas life and death, a fight
 For home and honour, freedom and the light.

For Noel in his youth it was as though
 Great Britain had made war upon his love.
 How could he care if Kruger was too slow
 For Cecil Rhodes and those who try to shove
 The British flag as fast as it can go
 About the earth—too fast, though, for the dove
 Of peace, because the bird insists on leisure
 And giving all men time to take their pleasure.

He nothing knew but that a foul excitement
 Had seized his friends and blown their lives to hell.
 Each side drew up a charge-sheet and indictment
 To prove that all the horrors that befell
 Were well deserved, because the bloody fight meant
 That truth was out to ring the liar's knell.
 Which was the liar? Nations disagree
 And fight like Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

But in this case the Dutchman, Tweedledum,
 Was not one-tenth the size of Tweedledee,
 The Englishman, who banged his noisy drum
 And screamed as usual of Liberty.
 In Freedom's name the khaki thousands come.
 The world looks on, pretending not to see,
 Because no other nation's strong enough
 To cry out "Shame" upon Great Britain's bluff.

Katrina vanished. Noel was removed
 To Durban, there to simmer in regret
 And there to guard his mother, as behoved
 A boy too young to wield a bayonet,
 And e'er to doubt what Chamberlain had proved,
 That Kruger had the Lion in his net.
 But Noel only knew his love was slain
 And did not care a damn for Chamberlain.

Gigantic Boers had thrashed and nearly killed him.
 But he'd have done the same had he a sister.
 He lived again the story, and it thrilled him
 To think of Katje and how he had kissed her.
 The thought of her gigantic brothers filled him
 With memories that acted like a blister
 Upon his love and made him hate the row
 That filled the scene of his young idyll now.

Because he was pro-Katje he could not
 Conceal the fact that he was ardently
 Pro-Boer. His feelings made the place too hot
 And he was forced to take his misery
 To Cape Town, where Great Britain shortly shot
 The armies she had shipped across the sea,
 Cook's son and Duke's both sent to Table Bay
 While Kipling killed Paul Kruger with his lay.

Now Noel had this pull o'er me and you
 That we saw nothing but the khaki show,
 The cheering troops dispatched from Waterloo,
 Believing they had only got to go
 To make quite sure the sea was just as blue
 In Africa as in the Channel, so
 That Britons wheresoe'er they choose to halt
 Should still remember that the sea is salt.

In Cape Town with his mother Noel saw
 The fifty thousand horse and foot arrive
 In Table Bay and shortly martial law
 Made life a horror to all things alive.
 The army thrust the city down its maw
 Just like a bear with honey from a hive.
 If this is how an army treats its friends,
 What will it do when let loose on its ends?

Now things were done in Cape Town which won't bear
 Retailing. As the army must be fed,
 Civilians must go short, for who's to care
 If helpless households are left short of bread
 Because the bodies of young men who wear
 A uniform must be kept plump for lead
 Propelled by hostile guns to smash them,
 And hostile bayonets to jab and gash them?

And who's to care if maidens are excited
 By males so many and so brutally
 Robust? And who's to care if they are slighted
 And left to face a pregnant misery?
 Who ever cares to see that wrongs are righted
 When they are done by a community?
 But Noel cared, and all the things he saw
 Made his young soul revolt from martial law.

His thoughts took refuge in remembered dreams
 Of Love beneath the ever-wheeling stars.
 Now comes the moon to shed her clement gleams
 Athwart the vision's cruel prison bars.
 Love from the lovers kindly she redeems,
 Else is their love the wickedest of wars
 That blasts and blights the holy central realm
 That human follies sinfully o'erwhelm.

Observe the lily how she proudly bears
 Her head and gives the perfume of her being
 In utter freedom to the moving airs
 That waft her music to the holy gleeing
 Abounding in the universe. She wears
 No visionary mantle, but agreeing
 In love and death she loves before she dies
 And gives delight to bees and butterflies.

O lovely lily waxen-white as death,
 O lily white as love's extreme delight,
 Thou emblem of the utter linkèd breath
 That comes in lovers' kisses in the night,
 Thou innocence, for whom love laboureth,
 Be thou the sign of love in mortal sight.
 Dream of the rose and dream the red rose pale.
 Beyond all dreams in love are lilies frail.

Hardly has life a sweeter joy than this,
 To see the loved one lie in happy sleep,
 The sleep that ends the tender after-kiss
 And seals the treasure conjured from the deep,
 Embalming love in the enchanted bliss
 That creeps as mists from water-meadows creep
 And fill the moonlight valleys with a shroud
 Of silver while the singing birds are loud.

So Noel dreams in Cape Town while the men
 Who'd come to murder Katje's kinsmen made
 A little hell to make them ready when
 They went forth to the greater they were paid
 To make because Sir Alfred Milner's pen
 Would not unsay the follies it had said.
 Sir Alfred's mind, obsessed by his bureau,
 Insisted that a wound-up clock must go.

That clocks can ever stop had never dawned
 Upon the minds of Milner and his clerks.
 So having wound theirs up they sat and yawned,
 And never saw the shower of red sparks
 That fell upon South Africa. They scorned
 To think of anything except the marks
 They'd won in passing for the Service Civil.
 Their minds stopped there; their brains went to the devil.

In Cape Town Milner did in little what
 Much later he achieved in large ; *id est*,
 He gathered up a horde of clerks to squat
 Upon a country's life and interest.
 He did it not to serve some wicked plot,
 But just because he thought it right and best.
 The bureaucratic mind is bounded by
 Its bureau, where intelligence must die.

Behold in Cape Town bedded out the seeds
 Of Prussian Britain practising the art
 Of Bureaucratic war against the weeds
 Of Liberty grown rankly in the heart
 Of Boerdom. For the appetite still feeds
 Its growth, and now Sir Alfred Milner, Bart.,
 Had seized his chance to practise on the weak
 The God-like System he believed unique.

Sir Alfred Milner passed in very high
 And had the maximum of marks, which made him
 Imagine he was swept up to the sky
 Elijah-like to see the folk who paid him,
 And had no marks, all labouring to try
 To meet his bills. And nobody gainsaid him.
 And so he did just what he damn well pleased,
 And had the Boers and British tightly squeezed.

The Boers had marvelled greatly that a man
 Like this should represent Great Britain while
 Great Britain still declared it was her plan
 To free all slaves. They knew not British guile.
 They knew not how the British nation can
 Crush little nations with a pious smile
 And unctuously talk of liberty
 What time they practise rape and piracy.

The British Isles were made for pirate chiefs
 Who thither flock from every land and clime,
 Russ, German, Jew, Levantine, bringing griefs
 And sorrows in their train, and every time
 Great Britain goes to war for her beliefs
 They drag her through the grime and bloody slime
 Of war for loot and gold and precious stones
 Got out of pawn with dead men's bleached bones.

But nothing Noel knew of Milner, Bart.,
 Or Buchan, Duncan, Curtis and the crew
 Of elegant young men who got their start
 From Balliol, which warped their mental view.
 His instinct, frightened, whispered to his heart
 That here was something wrong, for he well knew
 The quality of Katje's giant brothers.
 How mean by contrast were these khaki others !

So sick at heart he watched the troops arrive,
 The transports and the stores, the knitted socks,
 The belly-bands, the women who contrive
 To get attached to armies, till the rocks
 Of Table Bay were littered and alive
 With wasted clothes, tobacco, women, stocks
 Of cigarettes and food, tough beef and weevil'd biscuit,
 Food left so long that no sane man would risk it.

And Noel saw the Generals whom I
 Remember only as adorning buttons.
 French, Plumer, Buller, Kitchener go by
 As gay as parrot tulips grown by Suttons'.
 He heard big talk of how the Boers would fly,
 How they'd be packed off quickly to their muttuns.
 In spite of all the noise and glare and glitter
 It hardly moved him more than sparrows' twitter.

Nothing could move him since his love was dead,
 Blown up by war and British dynamite.
 It seemed to Noel that his luckless head
 Had been selected by some angel's spite
 To bear the weight of all the sinful dead
 Had piled up till it reached High Heaven's height
 To call down thence the mighty wrath of God
 To make men drench with blood the living sod.

Black, black indeed, for Noel's life at home
 Grew daily worse. His father's wealthy Jew
 Had got the honey from his honeycomb
 And packed off back to Hamburg, there to view
 In dreams the golden conquest of the foam
 With German dyes to dye it Prussian blue.
 And Noel's father Henry was left landed
 With debts, collapsed, irreparably stranded.

In Cape Town Henry stormed and wept and raged,
 But Ellen did not care a single damn,
 And waited till his wrath was half assuaged
 Then let him know she thought it all a sham.
 She'd seen this coming as it had been staged,
 The fatal end of Henry's small "I am."
 Male egoism's comic to the woman
 Who has her boy to keep her warm and human.

She said his place was with his regiment,
 And Henry's Public School boy code of "form"
 Cropped up and shook his later Jo'burg bent
 For looking out for wreckage in a storm.
 He donned the khaki and was shortly sent
 Up-country, where the Boers were said to swarm
 Upon the brown illimitable veldt
 Beyond which lay the coveted gold belt.

There Henry lived through two most famous fights
 And lost a stone in weight, and rose to be
 A Major for discovering the sights
 Of all the rifles were quite useless. He
 Was sent to Cape Town, where the lurid nights
 Would make another scabrous Odyssey,
 For there were ladies who had little else on
 Than Impudence to brighten the Mount Nelson.

Poor Henry, come to raise a horrid scandal
 About his rifles, fell into another
 Anent those rifling triflers who the candle
 Were burning at both ends, because no other
 Illuminant was there for them to handle.
 The light in men is very hard to smother,
 And Cape Town must have been a dreary hole
 To young men used to play a sparkish rôle.

Poor Henry had to pay the price of being caught
 In lechery while others with immunity
 Did much the same but took care that they bought
 And paid for and enjoyed it with impunity.
 But Henry lighted on a damsel who had brought
 Her husband with her and in perfect unity
 She worked with him, and made a horrid bloomer,
 Thought Henry rich but found he was a stumer.

So she made trouble. Henry had to go.
 The disappointed husband thrashed him till
 He could not see for pain, to let him know
 That Jack must have his price for sharing Jill.
 Cold then was Afric, cold as Arctic snow
 To Henry now that Fortune seemed to fill
 His belly full of snowballs and his soul
 With gall, his heart with fiercely burning coal.

The uncorrected rifles still were sent up
 To keep the British army well equipped.
 And Henry, with his righteous fury pent up,
 Felt like a child who's been unjustly whipped.
 And with a gang of raw recruits he went up
 To see them in their bath of fire dipped.
 He led them in a brave but futile charge,
 And on the scroll of fame he is writ large.

No need for me to tell the deed he did,
 The deed that did him in and twenty score
 Of blackguards who weren't sorry to be rid
 Of Fortune who had shown herself a whore,
 A strumpet who would take the highest bid
 And then refuse because it was not more.
 They had one blinding flash of beastly lust,
 One crowded hour, and then were dust to dust.

The whole affair was one more Staff mistake.
 A kopje which by rights should dominate
 A river's bend was found in fact to make
 The river's other bank—of course too late.
 Two regiments were trapped and for their sake
 Three more were sent to share their hapless Fate.
 Their Fate was an old General whose map
 Would keep on falling from his short-legged lap.

He lost his temper so that he could not
 Remember where precisely he had stuck
 The pins that stood for regiments. He got
 So flustered that he trusted to his luck,
 Which, backed by the conceit of a true Scot,
 Had raised him steadily above the ruck,
 Without his learning more than how to be
 Impressive in his bland stupidity.

He had the gift of silence, and a face
 Most like a wedge of Cheddar cheese or like
 An uncooked ham, and women had no place
 In his philosophy, but as the hoarding shrike
 Will keep dead bees, the trophies of the chase,
 Impaling them upon a thorny spike,
 So he with medals, orders, on his chest
 Pinned all his life, and banished all the rest.

Such men are trusted with the lives and dreams
 Of thousands, with the fate of millions.
 The treasure of a nation's poured in streams
 To keep them well equipped with men and guns,
 While other men whose noble fancy teems
 With fruitful thought must count their pence by ones
 And twos and threes, and starve for ammunition
 With which to set out bravely on their mission.

This man could never face a fact, and what
 He did was right because he did it. Q. E.
 D. It never struck this most successful Scot
 That others paid for what he failed to do. He
 Had often had a drunken Tommy shot
 When he himself was more than common screwy.
 And yet his heart belied his wooden features,
 'Twas soft, but never for his fellow-creatures.

A thousand men were for this famous man
 A thousand uniforms and bayonets
 Supplied, in much the same way as a hen
 Supplies her eggs, by Government, which sets
 No limit on expenditure of men.
 "Lest we forget." But everyone forgets
 The cost of glory, aye, and glory's self,
 Once a campaign is laid by on the shelf.

A soldier knows his candle is but brief,
 A tallow dip to gutter in the sun,
 And he has but a very short relief
 From peace and boredom. When the war is won
 Or lost, then he must fall back like a leaf
 Raised by the wind and made to dance and run
 A little time and then to flutter down
 To rest with other leaves decayed and brown.

Now Henry's gang of raw recruits were told
 To march across to join the Fusiliers
 Who, as the plan of tactics should unfold,
 Would treat the Boers as Mr Wackford Squeers
 Thought fit to treat the boy who caught a cold—
 That is, they'd make them see that British cheers,
 C—H—double E—R—S, can spell
 Defeat, as likewise double L spells hell.

So Henry set his British blackguards cheering
 And rushed across to where the other troops
 Were—by the map. Instead they saw appearing
 The enemy in skilfully placed groups,
 Who coolly set about the task of shearing
 The British Army, which with groans and whoops
 Stood still a moment and then rushed ahead,
 The living all forgetful of the dead.

The Fusiliers for weeks had hardly had
 A chance of getting in a single shot.
 They had been used to illustrate a fad
 Of a Staff Officer who had then got
 His orders from our G.H.Q. which, sad
 To tell, had realised that things were not
 The same as Autumn Grand Manœuvres,
 But war and death were merciless removers

Of men and reputations and the vanity
 That makes life gay and picturesque,
 They leave but little room for that inanity
 Which makes a man who blunders at a desk
 The arbiter of parcels of humanity.
 Poor human men so helpless—'tis grotesque
 To think of all the evil left behind
 By honest fools who act because they're blind.

Meanwhile the Fusiliers had been forgotten.
 Their Colonel saw his chances of promotion
 Break up and crumble like an apple rotten
 Or like a hulk left drifting on the ocean,
 Just what it was, a sea of misbegotten
 Commands derived from the conceited notion
 That British armies have but to appear
 To paralyse the enemy with fear.

This Colonel, thinking he'd been purposely
 Neglected and kept out of the despatches,
 And also thinking of his family—
 His sons' careers, his dreary daughters' matches—
 Resolved that his great regiment should be
 The grand repairer of his General's laches.
 At worst he could be shot, at least degraded,
 Or fame might do what never yet his pay did—

That is, defray expenses. So small thoughts
 Do breed gigantic deeds. The thought of dinner
 Has brought about the storm of mighty forts
 Till then impregnable. No saint nor sinner,
 No Cæsar with his legions and cohorts,
 No Cromwell, no Napoleon's a winner
 Without some simple thought dictating action,
 Which else is blurred with flurried mental faction.

Take all the muddle that is somehow straightened
 Sufficiently for peaceful life to go on,
 Though not perhaps to any very great end,
 And multiply it to the n th and so on
 To infinity, until you make the State end
 In looking like the famous Laoköon,
 And even then you'll not have such a tangle
 As grips an army that Red Tapers strangle.

Red tape is all the red the public sees
 When it is told another nation's plotting
 And bent on crushing all its liberties
 And ravishing its women-folk, and blotting
 Its ships and commerce from the seven seas,
 And burning down its houses and garrotting
 The householders, and generally looting—
 Such stories are employed to help recruiting.

And so I tell them now to pass the Censor,
 Who might suspect my innocent intention,
 Which is to make my poem a condenser
 Of things so true as to transcend invention.
 They'll be distilled and rarefied, and then, sir,
 The Civil List will groan beneath my pension,
 Accorded me for services to letters
 Accomplished in the teeth of all my betters.

Is not my pen the servant of the nation?
 It does its bit to advertise the ardour
 With which the British put a termination
 To folk who hit them hard by hitting harder.
 It sets down plainly for your admiration
 The feast that once adorned Great Britain's larder.
 Though now forgotten it is worth the trouble.
 Without soft soap no child can blow a bubble.

This long digression may be very boring,
 But so is war. What is it but digression?
 A way of waking nations up from snoring,
 Much as a writer breaks the dull procession
 Of facts and fads to keep the reader poring
 Until he ends the book in one short session.
 So wars are used to jog the nations jaded,
 And keep their energies from getting faded.

Good gracious! I've forgotten the affray
 In which I left my hero's father scrapping.
 That qualifies me for a general's pay
 And rank, the knack of indolently napping
 When I have sent whole regiments to slay.
 Muse, Muse, my dear, you've earned a sharpish slapping.
 You undertook this job, and here you let me
 Go riding off on fancies that beset me.

When Henry saw how he had been entrapped
 He cursed and swore and damned the British nation.
 He swore and said the Staff ought to be scrapped
 Or sent back home to ask the proclamation
 Of Peace, but not a proclamation wrapped
 In Foreign Office jargon: a cessation
 Of war as just a filthy bag of tricks
 Unworthy human life this side the Styx.

Yet how can man die better, said Horatius,
 Than facing fearful odds. Macaulay gave
 Himself the lie, and proved the lie fallacious,
 By dying quietly in bed, a grave
 And decent way of dying. But, good gracious!
 What does it matter which of these you have?
 Death is the end, with nothing to be said,
 But no one really wants to join the dead.

So why this most expensive apparatus
 For hastening the end of simple men? . . .
 In Henry's thoughts there came a sharp hiatus
 As shells and bombs began to burst again,
 And ploughed the ranks as Roman Cincinnatus
 Once ploughed the land. And every now and then
 The ploughed-up ranks were sown with leaden seeds
 Which gave at once a crop of widows' weeds.

A baresark rage sprang up in Henry's soul,
 A rage against the British Cabinet,
 But, being out of reach, he spent his whole
 Blind rage upon the nearest he could get—
 That is, he made a certain rock his goal
 And urged his men to charge and know no let.
 The rock he marked took shape in Henry's madness
 As that sly Jew who'd lured him into badness.

The very stones of Africa, he shrieked,
 Are Jews, Jews, Jews, with little oily eyes,
 So old that all the sap of life has leaked
 For them away, and boredom they disguise
 By pulling off the schemes on which they've piqued
 Themselves, while helpless Gentiles rise
 In vain against them, Jews, Jews, everywhere,
 Extracting money from the very air.

There was no point in gaining that objective
 Except that Henry wished to have his fling.
 No man in danger's soberly reflective,
 And Henry could not think of anything
 Except of quickly finding some effective
 Manœuvre which with luck might safely bring
 The remnant of his cursing, sweating troops
 Out of the zone where they were slain in groups.

Himself was wounded in the arm and thighs,
 But he addressed his Tommies in the speech
 They understood and said: "You b——rs, rise
 To this God-damned occasion, up and teach
 The bloody, canting Boers that all the lies
 We British die for are beyond their reach.
 They're fighting for their country, we are fighting
 To help a whale to swallow down a whiting.

"So come on, boys, you blasted sons of bitches,
 We won't be slaughtered here like sheep, or let
 Our lives be chucked away to swell the riches
 Of any Jew or German baronet.
 I would I had him here, I'd have his breeches
 Debagged and burned, and then I'd damn well set
 Him standing with his hairy legs a-shaking
 On yonder rock to do his Empire-making."

The Tommies cheered and threw their kit away,
 And nothing kept but cartridges and rifles.
 They'd have, as Henry said, their fling that day
 Nor let themselves be held back by such trifles
 As shrapnel or barbed wire. They would SLAY.
 They felt the last ferocity that stifles
 All reason, justice, human comradeship.
 The blindest hatred had them in its grip.

They hacked their way clean through the Fusiliers,
 Who'd come up to support them at a trot.
 They hurled themselves with coarse, blaspheming cheers
 And never aimed or marked a single shot,
 But blazed at random. O! the poor, poor dears!
 Their drill, their training, all were clean forgot.
 Their charge became a furious stampede
 In which the fastest runner took the lead.

And no one knew at all what he was doing.
 The wounded knew they could not move and that
 Was all they knew. The rest were off pursuing
 The maddened troopers who were shooting at
 The sky, the earth, while some stood still boo-hooing,
 And others howled and flung their bodies flat,
 And hid their faces or lay dully gaping
 To see Death's hand a dead man's features shaping.

The baresark Henry hardly felt his hurt,
 But shouted hoarsely till he reached the rock
 Of Yiddish shape upon the famous spurt
 With which at school he used to beat the clock.
 The two men with him fell, and in the dirt
 Poured out their blood and quivered in the shock
 Of death. And others came and cursed and shouted.
 That they had won a victory none doubted.

And so they had. They saw a stir and bustle
 Among the enemy who could not know
 That such a frantic, fearless, frenzied tussle
 Was simply silly. It was time to go,
 They thought, and set about it with a hustle
 To render harmless the impending blow.
 The hard-up Colonel of the Fusiliers
 Pounced on his chance to save his sons' careers.

He rushed his men up (what was left of them),
 And by this time it had begun to dawn
 Upon the rest, whose customary phlegm
 Was nigh exhausted, that their right had drawn
 Most perilously tight the outer hem
 Of their defences, where a breach gan yawn
 Invitingly. They filled it fairly quickly
 What time their officers looked green and sickly.

For no one knew whence came the impetus
 That carried the heroic soldiers on,
 Like figures in some crazy calculus
 Manipulated by a crank who's gone
 A little mad. They moved impervious
 To shot and shell until the fight was won,
 And they were standing on a scrubby nek
 And saw the Boers inspanning for a trek.

They stood and watched the enemy preparing
 To fly, but no one told them what to do.
 The jeopardy they stood in was too glaring,
 But how to extricate them no one knew,
 And only Henry had the reckless daring
 For victories afresh and conquests new.
 And he, half dying, wished to have his fling
 Before he learned the angelic song to sing.

He rushed ahead with half-a-dozen men
 And one machine gun. Soon they were but three.
 These were supported by another ten
 Unable to resist the mad *mêlée*,
 And others followed, ten and ten again,
 All in a wild and maddened ecstasy,
 Who flung themselves upon the Boer position
 To find themselves at once *sans* ammunition.

This awful fate brought Henry to his senses,
 And when he looked and saw the mangled dead
 And then the enemy's untouched defences,
 His heart with most remorseful anguish bled.
 The mind in such an awful time condenses
 The thought of years, and Henry turned and said :
 "I've played the game, by God, I've played the game,
 And wasted life to glut a Jew with fame."

And as he spoke he saw that Cuddie Mason,
 His fag at school, was standing by his side,
 And Cuddie grinned and put a cheery face on
 The hell they shared—or rather, Cuddie tried,
 For he could only twist a grim grimace on
 His remnant of a face, which he had tied
 Together with his putties. “Cuddie! Cuddie!”
 Cried Henry, “this is absolutely bloody!”

For answer Cuddie spun round like a top,
 And gave a yell, a whistle and a croak,
 And toppled down and crumpled with a flop,
 And grinned as though this were another joke
 At his expense. He pleaded for a drop
 Of water or with thirst he'd surely choke.
 And Henry had a little flask of rum.
 “That's good,” said Cuddie, “that was good, by gum.”

No thought had Henry then but for his fag,
 The bright-eyed, scapegrace, brilliant young Etonian
 Whom it had been his duty to debag
 And thrash for cultivating a Neronian
 Indifference to duty and the drag—
 That is, he had not used the cream Meltonian
 Upon the jack-boots Henry used to wear
 To hunt the harmless whippet-haunted hare.

This twisted thing, this blood-bespattered shape,
 Was Cuddie, Cuddie of the piping voice
 And merry smile, who, grinning like an ape,
 Would come each morning with the dreary choice
 Of sausages or fish. And Cuddie in a scrape
 Would make the Matron's virgin heart rejoice,
 So guileless and so sweet was the expression
 With which his big blue eyes would cloud confession.

His eyes had now that babyish, bright gleam
 As though he wished his innocence to make
 Death's hand a little lighter, that his dream
 Of childish glee might never have to wake
 Upon a world where things are what they seem.
 And Henry's whole desire was now to take
 This battered piece of childhood in his arms
 And rescue it from filthy war's alarms.

He thought of Noel, Noel come to this,
 The loveliness of boyhood ground to dust.
 And Henry felt his son's dear baby kiss
 Upon his cheek, and vowed that Noel must
 Be given every chance, and never miss
 So fatally the love of life in lust
 For gain or women or the gambler's pleasure
 In dicing with the gods for ease and leisure.

Though weak himself, he shouldered senseless Cuddie
 And staggered back towards the British lines.
 The sunset sky was amethyst and ruddy
 With orange tints, like grapes on autumn vines.
 And Henry had a vision of his study,
 With books, cigars and slyly smuggled wines
 Laid out by Cuddie for an evening's orgy
 With Wyndham-Davies, known as Georgy-Porgy.

And Wyndham-Davies in the end was sacked
 Because of Cuddie, for the same old reason
 For which the walls of Ilium were attacked
 And Sodom and Gomorrah for a season
 Incurred the fury of the Lord, who lacked
 The kindly knowledge of the world which, please, on
 Behalf of Wyndham-Davies I invoke.
 For being sacked from Eton is no joke.

O Cuddie, Cuddie, you were Eton's Helen.
 For you the world to England is all Troy.
 For you the world is sliced up like a melon,
 A feast for England's darling Eton boy.
 For you Great Britain's turned into a felon
 To steal the earth to make her darling's toy.
 O Cuddie, Cuddie, black is the disaster
 That smashes you, the earth's great mistress-master.

So Henry, sobbing underneath his load,
 Half dead, half blinded, almost wholly crazy,
 Came crawling back upon the sandy road
 By which he'd rushed in his ecstatic, hazy
 Determination not to bear the goad
 He vaguely felt had pushed him from his lazy
 But profitable life among the Jews,
 With whom to deal is "Heads or tails you lose."

From British throats came rousing cheer on cheer
 As Henry's deed was slowly realised.
 With Cuddie dead, as, dying, he drew near
 He saw their folly clear and undisguised.
 It angered him their foolish shouts to hear,
 Well knowing how his thoughts would have surprised
 And shocked each manly patriotic shouter,
 Had they but known him as he was—a doubter.

He staggered in and laid poor Cuddie down,
 And scrawled upon a paper with his blood,
 "My boy—for England!" Knitted in a frown
 Of pain his brows were, as in sudden flood
 His life ebbed out, not knowing the renown
 In which it ended. Tottering he stood
 In agony to find death intervening—
 "For England not for Empire" was his meaning.

And soon he died with Cuddie in his arms
 And curses on his lips for millionaires
 With Jewish names, who with no other charms
 Than money can so complicate affairs
 And make great nations nothing but their farms
 Which they lease out, and when they need repairs
 They let them go to ruin to avoid
 The risk of trouble with the unemployed.

There must be heroes or a war's so dull
 That nobody could stand it for a week.
 'Tis far too like Death's horrid, grinning skull,
 Which through the Press has got the power to speak,
 And lest its words should seem but void and null,
 A hero's voice must ape the accents meek
 Of Jesus Christ, and say that greater love
 Hath no man than—has been displayed above.

Now all the fame amassed by Higgins, J.,
 L.J., M.R., in the vicinity
 Of Temple Bar was naught to what that day
 Was earned by Higgins soon to be V.C.,
 Which seems to show that Folly has its way,
 Though Wisdom through the ages tries to be
 A ruling principle. Can Wisdom rule
 When Man, all said and done, is such a fool?

Sir Somerset Mulready Higgins thought
 It could not, for, although he was the famous
 And learned Editor of the Report
 Of Privy Council cases, with Mandamus
 The key-word of his mind, which made the Tort
 As clear as day for every ignoramus,
 Although he was Right Hon., P.C., K.C.,
 No Harmsworth was more bellicose than he.

Sir Somerset on both sides the Atlantic
 Was famous, and his evening shirt front shone
 (As never did his wits, which were pedantic)
 With ribbon, star and gold medallion,
 Enough to drive a snob with envy frantic.
 In early life he'd been a learned Don,
 And every kind of University
 Had given him an Hon. Litt. Hum. degree.

He had more letters to his name than even
 Lord Avebury had on his title-page,
 More famous friendships than Sir Leslie Stephen,
 More honour as a literary sage
 Than Carlyle at his worst, yet he was driven
 To share the popular and frantic rage.
 "My boy—for England!" What a lovely headline
 For those who see the Army as the red line

That goes on to the crack o' doom. Of course
 It was too good for Harmsworth to resist.
 That gentleman was harnessing his horse
The Daily Mail to War which brought the grist
 Into his mill in Fleet Street with a force
 Impossible through any dodge or twist
 In peace time, and with Winston Churchill's vulture
 He pounced on poor old England's dying culture.

"My boy—for England!" Noel's fate was sealed.
 Sir Somerset forgave the hero's crimes
 As youthful follies when the war revealed
 The saintly soul with Alfred Harmsworth's limes
 Upon the centre of the stage. To yield
 The wrath of years unto the *Mail* and *Times*
 Gave old Sir Somerset more pleasant unction
 Than even to attend a royal function.

To widowed Ellen cables came in shoals,
 Her very parson-husband wrote to her
 And said he found his single cure of souls
 Had filled his life, and he could minister
 More proudly to his flock that on the scrolls
 Of Fame and Heaven and Harmsworth such a stir
 Was made by Higgins, whom he'd always known
 To be the kind of Man who Stands Alone.

And Ellen found Great Britain very grateful
 For the excitement Henry had provided.
 Where she was starved before she found her plate full.
 Her daily letters left her undecided.
 She found the thought of England very hateful.
 Her feelings and her hopeful thoughts collided.
 She wished to do the best thing for her son,
 And she was half inclined to cut and run.

The House of Commons voted her a pension,
 And she received the offer of a suite
 Of rooms at Hampton Court, which, let us mention
 It *sotto voce*, she declined to meet.
 At last she asked her son for his intention,
 And he replied that life was bitter-sweet
 Since he had news that Katje's home was burned
 And she in concentration camp interned.

And by some youthful instinct Noel knew
 The thought that held his father's fading mind.
 He also knew that he had work to do—
 A work for which his nature him inclined.
 What work it was that Time and Life must brew.
 And he resolved that Time and Life should find
 Him ready when they needed him to make
 His effort for his soul's and England's sake.

Sir Somerset now clamoured for his heir
 And for the widow. So these two set sail,
 Relieved to leave the heavy, brooding air
 That made South Africa a sultry jail,
 With Rhodes and Milner, that blood-guilty pair,
 Still pouring blood to please *The Daily Mail*
 And certain Jews who gathered up the spoils
 Now they had got Great Britain in their toils.

The *Kinfauns Castle* steamed from Table Bay
 While fifty thousand horse and foot were landed
 To back the first, in turn to melt away
 And call for fifty thousand more demanded
 By R. Kipling, while the widows pay, pay, pay,
 And dazed and wounded heroes are left stranded.
 But Noel left to find an education
 Laid at his feet by a thrice-grateful nation.

There in these brightly, lightly written stanzas
 You have the first instalment of a serial.
 None of your *Daily Mail* extravaganzas,
 But facts redeemed by poesy ethereal.
 Don Quixote's fancy tweaks the Sancho Panzas
 Who built up England Liberal-Imperial,
 And made a Comic Opera of London
 By always doing what they should have undone.

Dear Reader, Fame and Love and Beauty come
 A-knocking at your door like canvassers
 To bid you help in making London hum
 With all the Fantasy that lately stirs,
 Since there's been nothing but the dreary drum
 And blatant bugle which have not drowned hers,
 But rather made her rouse her faery forces
 To steer old England on her ancient courses.

That is towards the high imagined goal
Beyond the rainbow, where true Liberty
Her dwelling has, and welcomes every soul
Who finds his way there through the ecstasy
That lies within the over-brimming bowl
Of life for those whose will is to be free.
Ours is the will. Desire we meet in God,
Whose wisdom breaks the measured silver rod.

Go forth, my poem : for, though no one like you,
There shall be ten of you before I've done.
And though my humour, Reader, may not strike you
As very funny, yet I'll have my fun.
When Noel fails, then I shall take up my cue,
And let my pent-up thoughts and feelings run.
For in an epic there's no need to grovel
To rules one must consider in a novel.

CANTO TWO

CANTO II

TAKE, Poet, take thy pen, and thou, O Muse,
Dictate thy fancy whatsoever it light on.
If 'tis thy will, like Zola, to accuse,
Then shall thy Poet don the tragic chiton.
Wilt thou his guileless fancy disabuse?
Then take him for a week-end down to Brighton,
To drown his faith in cynical salt laughter
And show him what humanity is after.

The Muse, an early love of mine, took me
Aside and asked for four and sevenpence,
The fare to Cambridge, where she wished to see
My hero gain his first experience
Of English life by taking his degree
In Law and meeting the intelligence
That practises philosophy beside
The Cam. 'Tis Tabland's chiefest pride.

"My boy—for England!" Harmsworth's mighty trumpet
Blew several blasts when Noel donned his gown.
Reporters held the tub for him to thump it,
But Noel most politely turned them down,
And they had very ruefully to lump it
When he refused to add to his renown
By saying what he thought of England, or
Exactly what he'd come to England for.

“ Young Higgins silent as to his impressions.”
 He could not tell them he was simply dazed,
 With people in bewildering processions
 Through all his thoughts meandering. Amazed
 He was, disgruntled, bruised by the obsessions
 That London in his youthful mind had raised.
 So many people, huddled, dull and busy,
 Made Noel reel and all his senses dizzy.

Cambridge to him was a sublime retreat.
 Here youth was gay and old men were aslumber.
 Life was not trampled under countless feet,
 Nor was the soul half stifled by mere number.
 The English men and women in the street
 Impressed him chiefly as just so much lumber
 So few there were who walked with any aim,
 So many listless, bored, disgusted, tame.

Let's say at once that Higgins of the Hall,
 A member of the Pitt, the Athenæum,
 The A.D.C., and practically all
 The clubs that make a young man sing *Te Deum*
 To think he has escaped the dread black ball,
 Although in fact he'll nearly always flee 'em—
 Let's say at once that Higgins of the Hall
 Had Fortune, Fame and even Fate in thrall.

Not often does a poet have the luck
 To have his Muse enamoured of his hero,
 But when he does he knows he can't be stuck
 For inspiration somewhere down by Zero,
 And he can play the *raisonneur* and tuck
 Them up, as in the dramas of Pinero
 The kindly bore with verbiage distracts
 Attention from the dislocated facts.

Noel has been two happy years in *statu*
Pupillari, two years of careless growth.
 O Cambridge! when I turn and look back at you
 I feel inclined to take my Bible oath
 (Although agnostically minded) that you
 Instructed me in little but the sloth
 Becoming to a gentleman. However,
 To sing your praises here's my best endeavour.

O Cambridge! Learning's town where adolescence
 Is sent to be subdued and educated
 And toned down from the heady effervescence
 With which the young are parlously inflated,
 Thy mists exude a powerful putrescence
 Which I have always passionately hated.
 For though it cures a youth's swell-headedness,
 It turns his H_2O to H_2S .

Dear Cambridge! It is not alone thy climate
 That dries the marrow in a young man's bones,
 For not alone the thieving birds of Time ate
 Thy plums of learning and left bare the stones,
 But at the roots of learning's tree the lime ate,
 The quick-lime which, when Brown and Smith and Jones
 Asserted their industrial plutocracy,
 Destroyed the very thought of aristocracy.

A university is like a river
 Which from its source goes winding to the sea,
 But it may be more like a sluggish liver—
 For instance, Cambridge could not digest me.
 The thought of it still makes me sink and shiver,
 The waste of time and brains and L.S.D.—
 However, that is neither here nor there,
 Both I and Cambridge are the worse for wear.

A university should be a stream of mind
 Fresh watered from a country's healthy youth
 Which passes on the sea of life to find,
 Depositing its well-washed grains of truth
 Like gold. In my day mud was left behind.
 The only gold I knew there crowned the tooth,
 The canine, of a learned, famous bore,
 Whose lectures were a long protracted snore.

O! but the goodly stream of youth that flows
 Along the ditch called Cambridge year by year,
 The pretty tender murmur as it goes,
 The softest echo of the musick'd sphere,
 Rising and falling as it sweetly throws
 The song of Heaven to a mortal ear.
 But Donnish ears are much too long and hairy
 To hear the music of the realms of faery.

The very gargoyles on the antique walls
 Are more alive to youth's enchanted glee,
 As year by year it surges up and calls
 To age to break its frozen fantasy.
 I know a gargoyle who at college balls
 Has slithered down and winked and whispered me:
 "Young lover, you have naught to do with these
 Who offer you the vice of Socrates."

I wept to see the ancient seat of learning
 That nurtured Marlowe, Milton, Jonson, Gray,
 Erasmus, Newton and Sam Butler turning
 Into a place where none remains to pray
 Who comes to scoff, but leaves it with a burning
 Desire to see the whole thing swept away
 Before it goes entirely to the devil
 And sinks to Manchester's or Oxford's level.

Enough of this, for Noel had no notion
 That Cambridge was not what she still appeared,
 An alma mater whose maternal motion
 Was all to see her sons to manhood reared,
 To teach each boy a chivalrous devotion,
 What time he watched his swiftly growing beard,
 And had a few years' healthy breathing-space
 Before Dame Fortune called him to his place.

Cambridge has beauty. Go you to St Ives
 And walk by road until you top the hill
 Where Girton keeps her busy humming hives
 Of girls. There stop and gaze and take your fill
 Of King's, whose chapel rears aloft and drives
 Its pinnacles to heaven o'er the still
 Untainted comfort of the ancient town
 That, save for King's, in grey mists seems to drown.

Then drop down quickly to the Backs where trees
 Make noble avenues and leafy screens
 And curtains drawn delighted eyes to tease
 With glimpses of the trim and turfy greens,
 The Epicurus' gardens made to please
 The scholar's senses, not by any means
 So dim and dull as those pretend who think
 The scholar's mind is clouded by his ink.

For other beauties see John Willis Clark,
 Whose guide to Cambridge costs the humble shilling.
 The time has come for Noel to embark
 Upon adventure, though he's most unwilling
 To take the plunge, suspecting me of dark
 Designs upon his happiness in killing
 His all-too-fleeting time before he goes down
 And to the grindstone has to keep his nose down.

Young men there are like Etherington Smith
 Or Rupert Brooke whose quality of grace
 Can make them, as they walk and talk, a myth
 To whom the humbler race of men gives place,
 And like the heroines of Meredith
 They seem to spring from some forgotten race,
 Or possibly they're sent by the unborn
 To make our hopes of mankind less forlorn.

If I were Homer I'd begin my tale
 With mighty line describing how young men
 In eight-oared ships stir up the water stale
 And almost stagnant of an English fen,
 Year in, year out, in snow and rain and hail,
 Their two miles out and two miles back again,
 Their oars and sliding-seats together ringing,
 Strong arms and stalwart bodies nobly swinging.

Not being Homer I must rest content
 To sing the navigation of the Cam,
 Where I have seen a sudden beauty lent
 To ugliness to shine through all the sham
 Of Cambridge, when the light blue oarsmen sent
 Their cedar ship, with such a lordly slam
 As leaves all common craft awash behind,
 A-skimming up from Grassy to the Grind.

"O Troïka, my bird Troïka!" sang the Russian,
 M. Gogol, in his epic narrative,
Dead Souls. "Kanonen," sings the martial Prussian
 For all the racial symbol he can give,
 But I will take the eight-oared ship and gush on
 To show the dream for which the English live.
 O swan, O bird, O octave, O divine,
 No symbol's grace can ever equal thine.

I cannot tell the nothings that make up
 The charm of Cambridge ; books and games and talk,
 The hot discussions and the frothing cup
 Of second-hand ideas, confusing chalk
 With cheese ; the squeaking of a bumptious pup
 Who thinks he barks, or ever he can walk
 Attempts to run, and gobbles up at sight
 Whatever filth may tempt his appetite.

Gargantua ! O Rabelais, O Swift,
 Support me when I say the human belly
 Commands most human worship to uplift
 The race and save it from th'amorphous jelly
 To which without religion it must drift.
 " Perfectible is Man," said Percy Shelley,
 Who, quite unlike most poets, was unable
 To share the true religion of the table.

At Cambridge young men learn to eat and drink.
 I've seen Bill Pens or Stephen Gassler guzzle
 Enough to keep a household from the brink
 Of poverty. I've pondered long the puzzle
 How one can eat so much and never think
 That two or three are starving and can muzzle
 The wolf no more. But Stomach is our lord.
 We all eat more than we can well afford.

Now when my most capricious Muse and I
 Went down to Cambridge, Noel's twenty-first
 Birthday was honoured very happily
 In ample satisfaction of the thirst
 And hunger of the young fraternity
 Of sportsmen who his friendship gently nursed
 To be included in the invitations
 To share what should be liberal libations.

A cantalupe, hors d'œuvre, with Haut Sauterne,
 Soup thick and clear, red mullet, salmon trout,
 An aspic, curried eggs and cutlets turn
 The normal spaces of the appetite well out
 And open new capacities to learn
 The power to face the solemn final bout
 Of eating called for by the lordly spread
 Sent by the Pitt at two-pound-ten a head.

Roast mutton elegantly christened Pré
 Salé, then sorbet and a cigarette :
 Liqueurs to wash the memory away
 Of what had been and light up what was yet
 To come, as faisan rôti, jambon d'York soufflé,
 Pêches Melba, petits-fours, an omelette
 Surprise, a bombe, brown bread and caviare
 Before dessert, madeira and cigar.

The forty finest eaters of their time
 Did ample justice to this noble spread ;
 They ate and drank until they felt sublime ;
 They drank and ate until upon its head
 The world was standing and it seemed a crime
 To give the smallest whispered hint of bed.
 Then after speeches all the party bawled
 And those who would not sing were badly mauled.

The Proctor sent a Bulldog in to say
 He'd be obliged if Mr Higgins' party
 Were somewhat less vociferously gay.
 The Bulldog was received with very hearty
 Applause and made to join the bawdy play
 Then going forward. He was dubbed Astarte,
 Upon a chair enthroned and wreathed with ribbons
 And worshipped with the rites described in Gibbon's

Decline and Fall and other works historic
 By scholars rather bored with Christianity,
 Who find it tepid after the caloric
 Of ages warmed with heathenish profanity.
 The Bulldog took the Forty's categoric
 Imperative with excellent urbanity.
 He also took the money pressed into
 His hand and did the thing it bade him do.

That is, he held his peace, although his hat
 Could not conceal the vine leaves in his hair.
 He joined the Proctor and informed him that
 The party was adjourning to repair
 To college (Hic!). That hiccup put the fat
 Into the fire. The Proctor's icy stare
 Alarmed the Bulldog into blurting out
 He'd let them treat him to a drop of—stout.

So Noel's name was written on the scroll
 Of that night's infamy, along with Scott
 Of Sidney, Jones of John's and Cattermole
 Of Cats, and others of a rowdy lot
 Who thought the gentlemanly rôle
 Was best upheld on rum or whisky hot
 Imbined with painted ladies of the night—
 In short, they thought it manly to get tight.

"For Auld Lang Syne" the well-fed forty sang,
 Their strong hands gripped to make a friendly chain,
 And through the sleeping town their voices rang
 And seemed to call to life but called in vain.
 O! Youth is like a bubble blown to hang
 Upon the air and take the rainbow stain
 Of life upon its clearness, then to vanish
 Like all the wonders men and women banish.

Noel regained his rooms on Staircase X,
 A drunker and a wiser man, and lay
 And thought the thoughts most common to his sex
 Upon whom Love has cast his golden ray.
 It never was his habit to perplex
 His wits with things his tongue refused to say.
 He thought of Katje and her giant brothers
 And then he thought with pain of certain others.

Sweet is the night air from the scented limes,
 Most sweet the moonlight in the river's mirror
 As Noel out of college swiftly climbs
 By crannies known too well for any error,
 And sweet to hear old Great St Mary's chimes
 And startled birds half waked with tirra-lirra.
 And sweet it is to thread the avenues
 With all to gain and much perhaps to lose.

So Noel felt, and so his blithe heart sang,
 His senses sobered by the keen night air
 That smelled of clover with the bitter tang
 Of herbs to make his soul alert, aware
 Of unknown life that all the Sturm und Drang
 Of youth concealed. It must be always thus,
 Thought he, the throbbing, thrilling mystery
 That permeates the earth, including ME.

Soon he was out beneath the hanging dome
 Of night upon Coe Fen, whose willows stand
 Like gnarled old men left muttering at home
 While youth and courage go forth hand in hand
 And through the world adventurously roam,
 All faith, all hope, its danger to withstand.
 Like old men were the willows menacing
 The faith and hope and beauty young men bring.

Willows aslant the brookish Cam and over
 The ditches of the water-meadows make
 Sad company for our young ardent lover
 Who ran his swift desire to overtake
 And heeded not the waterfowl and plover
 Who started up from sedgy nest and brake
 And whirled aloft and sank again to rest
 As the intruder passed each precious nest.

Another nest he dreamed, another bird
 Snug in her nest within the pretty cage
 That she was trapped in, bolted with a word.
 For words upon the brief, fantastic stage
 Of human life are, though it seems absurd,
 The sov'reign power against which mortal rage
 May dash itself in vain. There's no appeal.
 For words usurp the power they should reveal.

Now runs he through the wet unfathomed grass
 Where frogs and toads piped protest as he went;
 And now and then his breath could hardly pass
 His lips, so eager was his young intent
 To close with splendour, like young Fortinbras,
 The tragedy in which her life was spent.
 That night would be a tragedy without her.
 He was too young and innocent to doubt her.

Her garden gate was locked, but well he knew
 The friendly, lowly branching sycamore
 That wholly hid the house from outside view.
 And then it was an easy task to bore
 His way through shrubs that showered down their dew,
 And then to ope the kitchen garden door,
 To reach the pent-house and from thence the skylight
 Which servants latched and she unlatched at twilight.

She had a husband, elderly and quite
 Indifferent to what she had to give.
 In tenderness and love. He thought it right,
 Because she bored him, he and she should live
 A wedded couple in the public sight,
 Though wedded life to love was but a sieve
 With meshes made to hold a mild affection
 With all else finer left for his rejection.

The eager midnight hours he thought were best
 For work, or if not work then healthy sleep.
 She could not but obey his cool behest
 Although at first it took her months to weep
 Her disappointment out. But she was blest
 With happy spirits rooted very deep
 In her rich nature, and he could not kill
 Her passionate and thwarted woman's will.

A thwarted woman. I regret to say
 This intrigue was begun within the holy
 Precincts of Mother Church. Perhaps it may
 Be some excuse to say it grew up slowly,
 For her intent at first was all to pray
 And his to feel the music's melancholy.
 Not once or twice has King's historic chapel
 Helped on the trouble started with an apple.

This was in King's, where everything is done
 To soothe the troubled heart and make it clear
 That Beauty ends where Life has but begun,
 And that the human mind is grand, austere,
 A noble eagle gazing at the sun
 And never flinching, never showing fear
 Before the blinding wonder of the awe
 That holds all things within its mighty law.

An organ's music and a singing boy,
 The hanging spider-tracing of the roof,
 The branching columns and the coloured joy
 Of Flemish windows and the oeil-de-bœuf,
 The prism'd light, such beauties should employ
 The spirit, and bid passions stand aloof.
 And yet a spirit kindled in a church
 Won't always leave its body in the lurch.

I know that Noel's lady was sincere,
 And loved religion more the more she sinned,
 Found deeper comfort in it than the mere
 Attachment to a label she had pinned
 Upon her soul when it was young and clear
 And virgin, and unable to rescind
 Or to confirm a word of her belief
 Till it had stood the test of joy and grief.

Marconi! Thou wert long ago forestalled,
 How long I cannot say, but long ago,
 Perhaps when man in primal forests crawled,
 Perhaps—but honestly I do not know.
 When first I thought of this I was appalled,
 And so will you be as my verses show
 How woman through the ages has been tireless,
 In sedulous improvement of her Wireless.

Her S.O.S., her signal of distress,
 Is sent out on some all-pervading wave
 Of ether, though I can't pretend to guess
 Exactly how she manages to save
 Appearances the while, or to possess
 Her vivid secret closely as the grave.
 For so she does, as everyone must know,
 Who ever watched the human puppet-show.

In self-defence a woman is a liar.
 Untruthfulness lies in her limpid eyes.
 Her soul is coloured, like Will Shakespeare's dyer,
 With what it's dipped in, which is mostly lies.
 Because of this I don't, like Jeremiah,
 Give tongue and prophesy a world's demise.
 I just accept the disconcerting fact,
 And state it with my customary tact.

The reason is, I think, that if the fury
 That lives in woman's veins were fully let out,
 'Twould mean too oft a case for judge and jury,
 A horrid scandal in the papers set out.
 In every woman there's a lurking houri
 Who tears and struggles like a cat to get out.
 And when this cat has marked her destined prey
 (See Bernard Shaw) he cannot get away.

There have been famous virgins, Joan of Arc,
 (But she died young), and Florence Nightingale
 And Queen Elizabeth—a question mark
 Against *her* name—and there's the tale
 Of Santa Caterina who lay stark
 Upon a board, and still refused to fail
 Her chastity which she had put a price on,
 Accounting it her Kyrie Eleison.

Well! Other women other tastes, and when
 A woman's married there's an end to *that*.
 No longer can she think the world of men
 Perdition to her soul. She's belled the cat
 And learned much more from pussy than my pen
 Can delicately write without the gnat
 Which stung to death the work of D. H. Lawrence
 Exposing mine to general abhorrence.

This dissertation on the female lot
 Brings us at last to the inamorata
 Of Noel Higgins and the meagre plot
 Of this my almost Shandean cantata.
 To sing her praises words of mine are not
 Enough. They need a Richard Strauss sonata,
 Lasciviously falling on the ear,
 Or excerpts from the *Rosencavalier*.

And so to bed, as that old gossip Pepys,
 The rogue, concluded many entries in
 His diary. Now Noel softly creeps
 His way towards the partner of his sin.
 At every step his young heart bounds and leaps,
 For every step evokes a fearful din
 That seems to sound and echo through the house,
 Yet no one hears it but a vagrom mouse.

Pa-patter-pat, the third door from the staircase.
 The well-oiled lock lets in the honey-thief.
 O righteous you who never were in their case,
 And in your book of life turned every leaf
 Unspotted, you may take this as a fair case
 Of that on which you waste your pious grief.
 If Love is given, how can it be stolen?
Was man genießt das wird man wiederholen.

A young man marked down by a female rake
 Is marked for life. Still Life's a thing of scars
 And wounds, and it is better far to take
 Some hurt in fighting than in prison bars
 To bind the soul, there leaving it to ache
 And pine and hunger grimly for the stars
 That give so little light to souls half blinded
 With trying to oblige the narrow-minded.

The door with well-oiled lock has shut us out
 And Noel from our gaze has been withdrawn.
 So we have time for philosophic doubt
 Of modern morals as we pace the lawn
 And wait until the noisy stirabout
 Of birds announces morning at the dawn.
 O! happy birds for whom the day goes by
 Each moment telling of eternity.

Most melancholy light of dawning day,
 Most dismal din of crowing chanticleer,
 Another mystic night has passed away
 And still the same old universe is here.
 The same old sky, lit in the same old way
 To put a polish on the old veneer
 Of beauty which occasional illusion
 Makes credible amid the world's confusion.

While Noel and the blackbird sang the same,
 He on the wall, the bird upon a quince,
 Both singing Love that naught should ever tame,
 The boy's eyes saw a sight that made him wince;
 For standing by a large cucumber-frame
 He saw his tutor, Mr Mackworth-Prince,
 Who lived next door the house of love (or sin,
 As you prefer), look upward with a grin.

Now there are grins and grins, and this grin gave
 A kind of cruel triumph to the lip,
 And Noel felt as though the yawning grave
 Of moral judgment had him in its grip.
 He knew his tutor for a canting knave
 Who loved with pious finger-tips to dip
 In scandal, and the dirtier the better,
 That he might crush the spirit with the letter.

Now for the first time Noel felt unclean,
 For from the world that late had seemed so fair
 Poured in the fluid of the great latrine
 Through which inhuman humans throw off their
 Excreted thoughts of what they might have been
 Had they not failed of courage when 'twas Dare
 Or Perish, and been eaten up with rust,
 The thick deposit of life-long disgust.

He leaped down from the sycamore and ran
 As hard as he could pelt across the fields,
 To leave behind his vision of that man
 Whose grin revealed the power that England wields,
 Poor England, ridden with the Puritan.
 And Noel hated England then who yields
 Her joyous spirits to the blasphemous
 And sickly minded unadventurous.

He scarcely knew which way he ran, but soon
 Was hard by Grantchester, and knew the trees
 That grow by Byron's Pool. The merry tune
 Of water by the weir began unfreeze
 The chill upon his soul that craved the boon
 Of utter nakedness to win the ease
 Of body's answer to the fragrant wind
 Sweet from the reeds along the river lined.

And now young Noel on the dewy grass
 Dances and tramples buttercups and daisies,
 And sheds the *vanitatum vanitas*
 That late had choked him when he sang love's praises,
 And all the hurts that bruised his spirit pass,
 For now another song his spirit raises.
 See the white body shine and gleam and shimmer
 As greenish waters part before the swimmer.

Then out he comes and rides about the mead
 Upon an ancient horse come up to spy
 What sprite is here to interrupt his feed
 At such an hour when no one passes by.
 And lo! the pack-horse turned into a steed,
 A Pegasus that knows not how to fly.
 And larks go soaring from their hidden nests
 And pour the song for Noel from their breasts.

The Psalmist has a truthful word or two
 To sing of water, but he nowhere sings
 Of diving. That is left for me to do.
 But here so fast enthusiasm swings
 Me on that words can't possibly be true.
 I laugh within to see how Noel springs,
 Then stiffens, soars a moment, dips
 And smoothly through th'untroubled water slips.

To Noel Love was such an element
 As water, for refreshment and for healing.
 When in the world of men too closely pent
 Then he could dive into the stream of feeling
 That from the world of women God has sent,
 The meaning of the universe revealing
 Sufficiently for any honest mortal
 To understand and love it all and chortle.

Yet Noel was in bed and sound asleep
 What time his tactful gyp came softly knocking
 To find out whether he had better keep
 The breakfast on the table for—O shocking!—
 The shades of evening had begun to creep
 Towards the East before the interlocking
 Half-dreams, half-thoughts that held my hero bound
 Were broken by a bell's insistent sound.

What! Chapel time! And what! The day is gone!
 'Tis true. The sun shines wanly over Trinity
 And strikes the river opal, and upon
 The ancient scene sheds evening's new divinity,
 Which never has such high dominion
 As in the Cambridge Backs and their vicinity.
 At least that's my impression, though it's true
 Some other place may be the same to you.

Then Noel rose and bathed and dressed to find
 He had just time to honour the request
 Of Mr Mackworth Prince, who'd underlined
 The printed card conveying his behest
 That he should come before the college dined
 One hour with punctuality—*id est*,
 At six o'clock. And six o'clock had struck
 When Noel sallied forth to try his luck.

He found his tutor squinting down his nose.
 The interview was short but to the point.
 'Twas sad that Mr Higgins was of those
 Whose conduct put good morals out of joint.
 The clergyman stood up and on his toes
 Swung to and fro and seemed to say: "Aroint
 Thee, witch, aroint thee. *Vade Sathanas.*
Te excommunicabo Vanitas."

No word was said of Noel's escapade,
 But he was damned and told the college had
 Determined an example should be made
 To stop the college going to the bad,
 As it would surely do if Justice stayed
 Her hand. The tutor said it was his sad
 And painful duty—here he shed a tear—
 To terminate a promising career.

The tutor grinned and icy triumph flitted
 Across his lips, but Noel's pride refused
 To answer and no single word permitted
 To pass his lips. Yet soon he was amused
 To see how close his torturer had knitted
 The spider-threads of cunning he had used,
 And how that morning's knowledge shot and glinted
 Behind his eyes, though it was never hinted.

Straight from the tutor to the lady flew
 Our Noel with the tidings of his woe,
 To ask her what she now proposed to do,
 And whether she could nerve herself to go
 With him to London, there to find a new
 Existence. But the lady answered No.
 She wept and said she would not spoil his life
 By giving him so elderly a wife.

Her frankness made him see the brutal truth
 That she was nearly twice as old as he.
 He could not bear her present mood of ruth,
 For he was ruthless in his wish to see
 Her find in him some stronger thing than youth.
 But youth had been the lady's ecstasy,
 And when 'twas taken from her she was old enough
 To know 'twould come again if she were bold enough.

The drapers' shops were ravished of their crêpe,
 And half the town was hung with ribbons black,
 And wreaths of every sort and size and shape
 On Noel's staircase made a goodly stack.
 The hansom cabs wore streamers of black tape,
 And twenty Hallmen, each dressed in a sack,
 With ashes on his head, went through the town
 And wailed the news that Higgins was sent down.

A hearse was stolen from a stable-yard
 And led before an endless line of old
 Four-wheelers, and on each was hung a card
 Black-edged whereon the tale of woe was told,
 And some displayed to view a broken shard
 In token of the grief no heart could hold.
 "Not lost but gone before" and also "Mizpah"
 Were written large with these sad lines from *Rizpah* :

"My Noel will rise up whole when the trumpet
 Of judgment'll sound." And there was a band
 Which, shying at a tricky bar, would jump it
 Nor ever dream the tune was out of hand.
 If anyone disliked it let him lump it.
 They meant to make the whole town understand
 By means of *Saul* and Chopin interlarded
 Exactly how its loss should be regarded.

The "corpse" was put feet foremost in the train
 While on the platform—which is said to be
 The longest in the country—wept again
 The mourners with a wail that a banshee
 With no amount of practice could attain,
 Not even in the plaintive minor key
 Affected by the Irish School who strive
 To keep the ghost of poetry alive.

In London Noel had a *mauvais quart d'heure*
 With old Sir Somerset, who said he could not
 Hold up his head again. It hit him harder
 (He said) than any blow he'd had. He would not
 Expose the contents of his moral larder
 Till Noel told him what perhaps he should not
 Have done about the lady, when his uncle
 Went redder in the face than a carbuncle.

The tale was simply told as one man tells
 Another when he does not wish to lose
 A friendship. Noel opened up the cells
 Of all his heart. The old man could not choose
 But take its honey, though a thousand knells
 Of warning prejudice bade him refuse.
 He growled : " You should be careful what you do, man.
 What folly made you listen to the woman ? "

" A woman of a certain age," he mumbled,
 " Is like a sponge, and boyish love is water,
 To be mopped up, etcetera." He grumbled,
 And growled, and spluttered, and as his breath grew
 shorter

His wrathfulness within his entrails rumbled
 Until he frothed up like a glass of porter,
 And then he wrote the Don a stinging letter
 Which did no good but made him feel much better.

So Noel stayed in London and began
 To read in Chambers with a sparkish Lord,
 An Honourable and an Indian
 Come with what wealth his people could afford
 To learn to be a brown-faced Englishman,
 The very thing his people most abhorred.
 For East is East and Easterners detest
 Their culture being tainted by the West.

London was still the rather prim old city
 Described by William Makepeace Thackeray,
 Who spent his life in being rather witty
 At other folk's expense and made them pay
 Him for it. Though his mind was somewhat gritty,
 His style was smooth and ambled on its way
 Just like the comfortable bourgeois life
 Which satisfied John Bull if not his wife.

Those were the days when trade and *laissez-faire*
 Had come out top and forced their way into
 Society and bought the right to share
 The Season with the blue-blood people who
 Could not afford to scorn a millionaire
 Or to despise the plutocratic Jew,
 But kept the inmost secrets of their jobbery
 To dish the bourgeois upstarts through their snobbery.

And the result is London. O sweet Thames,
 Run softly till I end my song! O Lea,
 O Serpentine, whom civic art condemns
 To be a lake when Nature bade thee be
 A babbling stream, and O ye several gems
 That decorate the parks, come sing with me
 The praises of the city overblown
 With monstrous growths of stucco, brick and stone.

O bourgeois London, trusting to the mist
 To give thee beauty, even as the minds
 Of these thy children trust the fogs to twist
 Their thoughts to fit the narrow code that binds
 Their actions, so that, doing as they list,
 They may appear to do as Grundy finds
 Advisable for people of repute
 Who must *seem* moral and yet *be* astute.

O London, if I had the eloquence
 Of Bottomley and Shaw and R. J. Campbell
 Rolled into one and the intelligence
 Of Wells and Bennett, or if I could ramble
 Like Chesterton, defying common-sense
 With paradox as prickly as a bramble,
 I might then reach the necessary height
 To sing thee—but 'tis doubtful if I might.

O London! Thou wert homely, thou wert still
 The paradise of snobs until the night
 That I am coming to, when I can kill
 My vain desire to soar up to the height
 That Spenser reached so lightly with his quill.
 My Almost vainly waits upon my Quite.
 My London, whose prevailing scent was dung
 Instead of petrol, must remain unsung.

I can't invent a tune for it and therefore
 London shall be the great ground-swelling bass
 Through every canto without why or wherefore
 Except to give the genius of place
 Which in my epic I allow its share, for
 I mayn't forget the spirit of the race.
 That spirit made its London, I surmise,
 Because it liked it so not otherwise.

Thou, London, in my orchestra shalt be
 The big bassoon, the plaintive violin
 My Noel, to resolve my harmony
 And help my weary soul and brain to win
 The kingdom of true music where you'll see
 Me as a chamberlain to usher in
 His majesty the poet yet unborn
 Who'll change the crown of laurel for the thorn.

So here we are in London with the ghost
 Of Thackeray still peering through the pane
 To see his crowd of snobs become a host,
 Bohemia vanished ne'er to come again,
 The Bourgeois sea has eaten up its coast,
 And Birmingham has come to Dunsinane.
 In other words, mere money's broken down
 The walls of aristocracy's renown.

London was then still parcelled out—the slums,
 The suburbs and the West were all distinct
 As onions, daisies and chrysanthemums,
 Not seeming even in their perfume linked.
 Yet over London beat the muffled drums,
 And Death the Censor ruthlessly had inked
 The page of more life stories than the gold
 Of England could afford to leave untold.

There was a gloom o'er London as the years
 Crept by and left the Boers still undefeated.
 No glory came to dry a mother's tears
 Or to restore the pride well-nigh unseated
 Of Albion still smarting 'neath the sneers
 With which the Germans and the French had treated
 Her efforts to make Africa all red—
 As though it needed more blood to be shed.

Joubert and Cronje, Botha and de Wet,
 These were the names against which Birmingham
 Put up its list, which *seriatim* met
 Extinction in the agonising "Damn"
 With which the public struggled to forget
 Its sore humiliation in the sham
 Installed as War by patriotic Tories
 Attempting to revive their ancient glories.

An ancient glory like a sleeping dog
 Is better left to lie, for no good thing
 Can be repeated and it never pays to jog
 The past as it is slowly vanishing.
 Its slowness is a necessary clog
 Upon the present, which no doubt would swing
 Along too fast for those whose only notion
 Is to resist the law of change and motion.

It would be cruel if an ancient glory
 Were all we had to live for. If it were,
 Then life would be a sanguinary story
 Of war and rapine, with no pause for air
 And light and sweetness. It would be so gory
 That long ago the counsels of despair
 Would have prevailed and we should have resigned
 Our proud ambition to develop Mind.

For Mind is what we humans don't possess
 In any quantity. There's scarce enough
 To keep us going in the wilderness
 Of houses where we lie and cheat and bluff
 Our way through all the busy throng and press
 With naught to guide us save the very rough
 And ready morals given us in youth
 To be a working substitute for Truth.

Old England then was forced to dish the New
 And tried it in the old time-honoured fashion
 By making war, which is supposed to do
 A lot of good by tapping people's passion.
 It taps their pockets and their senses too
 And lays their feelings bare to those who lash on
 The public in its sentimental gushes
 For which a man who loves his country blushes.

Now there was gloom in London when my Noel
 Was sent from Cambridge, as I have narrated.
 The news was bad. The war refused to go well.
 The gloom was of the kind called inspissated.
 With Higgins nigh forgotten, Baden-Powell
 Alone had any chance of being fêted
 As one whose fame could make all London ring.
 And so all eyes were fixed on Mafeking.

Horse-racing was forgotten. Other news
 Was shifted to the class of "Also ran,"
 For since the hope of modern Waterloos
 Had faded out for every Englishman,
 And Glory still continued to refuse
 Her blessing on ambitions African,
 The nation numbed and sore and mortified
 Clutched hard at this to bolster up its pride.

The British do not know the tragedy
 Of War. It is a melodrama played
 With them as hero in the end to be
 Triumphant—(with a great advance in trade)—
 To fit the laws of stage morality
 By which they think the universe is swayed.
 They've never had War's horrors on their hands
 Because they fight in other people's lands.

The British truly know not what they do.
 They always have some trumped-up moral cause
 Which constantly they keep before their view.
 And when some nation by the lion's paws
 Is torn to bits, like France at Waterloo,
 Then British parsons bid for God's applause
 By saying what the victim might have done
 Had not the matchless British army won.

'Tis easy to be wise when the event
 Is past. But surely better then than never.
 How otherwise can Wisdom's eye be bent
 Upon our ceaseless fatuous endeavour
 To put our dogging Folly off the scent
 Of our hysterical attempts to sever
 The present from the awful consequences
 Of all our foolish ancestors' offences?

Now Noel was not wise before or after
 Or during the event, and nothing knew
 Save, suddenly, that London was all laughter,
 All shouts and cheers and tears, a boiling stew
 Of crazy people daft and growing dafter
 Because the thing they longed for had come true.
 Their greater dreams had been annihilated :
 A small one saved should be well celebrated.

He and a friend of his called Lumley-Jones,
 A sucking barrister, together read
 The posters in their variegated tones
 Of colour, buff, green, yellow, pink and red
 And white and blue, and to their very bones
 These two were thrilled, and Lumley bared his head.
 "By Jove !" he said. "By Jove! the tide has turned
 And now we'll have the burst we've hardly earned."

They caught the fever which like a simoom
 Blew through the London streets and howling sent
 The flooded populace against the boom
 And sluice-gates of society. The pent-
 Up hordes that scarcely had had elbow-room
 Within the narrow channels where they spent
 Their forces, now burst through and nearly drowned
 With licence the new liberty they found.

The British lion straightened out his tail
 In spite of certain knots that still were tied in it.
 The British public had its *Daily Mail*.
 The waking people's raucous voice had cried in it.
 The Education Act had told its tale.
 Old England had committed suicide in it.
 The British lion's roar had lost the note
 Of power that once came baying from his throat.

It sounded now more like a hungry pack
 Of beagles stricken with an itching mange.
 The lion screamed until his voice 'gan crack
 And seemed to be unwitting of the change
 He could not know, for he had turned his back
 On his old self that proudly used to range,
 Disdainful of the jealous smaller fry
 Who hid away whenever he passed by.

But Noel cared not how the lion roared
 So long as roar he did. And Lumley shouted
 And flung his charming manners overboard
 And with the others grunted round and snouted,
 And when he met a woman who ignored
 His charms he would not let himself be flouted
 But urged his suit until he had embraced her,
 Assuring her he was a woman-taster.

"That's my profession," he informed the throng :
 "A woman-taster by appointment to
 His Highness the Surajah of Geelong.
 So come along with me to No. 2
 Pump Court and have a rally of Ping-Pong,—
 As good a name for it as e'er I knew."
 This blameless youth, ascetic as a monk
 In ordinary life, was not yet drunk.

He was delighted like the rest to be
 Absolved for one night only from the tight
 Conventions and the dull monotony
 Of habit. And he revelled in this night
 Of patriotic bestiality,
 In celebration of the speck of light
 That showed at last through the Cimmerian gloom
 To give B.-P. his coveted Press boom.

Unfortunate initials! B.-P. stands
 For British Public, publicly set up
 'Mid blare and bluster, military bands,
 Illuminated signs, the flowing cup
 And overflowing mug, to make demands
 Of Privilege and force the Lords to sup
 The gall and wormwood of a revolution
 Which sapped all faith in every institution.

When B.-P. was relieved at Mafeking
 The great B.-P. in London was released
 From its subservience to everything
 Victorian, whose burden had increased
 With every year since Albert's soul took wing
 To occupy the marble mansion leased
 In heaven for it by Great Britain's Queen,
 Who thought her people were what he had been.

The howling mob surged westward down the Strand,
 And bugles blew and fireworks exploded,
 And peacocks' feathers passed from hand to hand,
 And women's lust by paper ticklers goaded
 Filled all the air with squeals, hot odours and
 Hysteria that blistered and corroded
 The souls unspotted of our two young men
 Who laughed to see the Mob break from its den.

Jones bought a drum and Noel bought a bugle
 And both wore paper hats and cardboard noses.
 They called themselves MacTavish and MacDougall
 And dangled sporrans made of old tea-cosies,
 To show that they were creatures centrifugal,
 As all men are when puberty discloses
 The all-important final joke of sex
 With which Dame Nature human nature wrecks.

They drummed their way into the Trocadero
 And dined and poured their champagne on the floor
 Or down the waiter's neck and shouted Cheero !
 And rushed at people they'd not met before,
 And saw in every shouting man a hero,
 In every woman a triumphant whore.
 An old man on a table tried to sing
 And vowed he'd just escaped from Mafeking.

Our noble two rushed at the lying fool
 And with the smilax wrested from the table
 Gave him a crown. He shouted for Home Rule
 And said he'd wear the green until the Babel
 Of Parliament was wrecked by ridicule.
 And Noel laughed until he was unable
 To move when the old fool said he was Zambra
 And had to meet Negretti at th' Alhambra.

To maffick and to maffick and to maffick,
 To find some outlet for their long-starved senses,
 This was the purport of that brainless traffic
 In women, wine and laughter that condenses
 In one night's joy that seems to some seraphic
 The horrors bred inside the moral fences
 That make the world a concentration camp
 Where Mrs Grundy rules with Mrs Gamp.

So put the bottle on the mantel-piege
 And we will put our lips to it when so
 Disposed. Meanwhile we'll join the breathless siege
 Laid to the Empire where young lechers go
 To pay the homage due from every liege
 To Venus, Bacchus, goat-foot Pan & Co.
 When bloodless or most bloody fights are won
 To make excuses for licentious fun.

The Empire (music hall) in Leicester Square
 Is British to the marrow while the other
 Is Anglo-Yid. But pious bishops dare
 The greater of these paragons to smother.
 They smile upon the Anglo-Yid, but stare
 In disapproval, and they make a pother
 About the British where the young man meets
 What else he'll find a-prowling in the streets,

Roll all the Boat Race and the Rugby nights
 Together and 'twere not one twentieth
 Of all the din and row that now affrights
 Each drunken Phryne as she draws her breath
 In almost panic at the awful sights
 That make life seem more terrible than death.
 Respectable old men have run amuck.
 Each thinks himself again a bouncing buck.

Forgetful of their wives, their families,
 Their ponderous careers, M.P.'s and brokers,
 Solicitors and civil servants quiz
 And shout. Their necks swell in their chokers
 As strutting up to Poppy, May or Liz
 They act just like the blackguard Cockney jokers
 Who in the streets outside make obscene japes
 And frighten girls with silly semi-rapes.

The promenade was packed with gaudy, gay
 And half-intoxicated creatures who
 Paid no attention to the acted play,
 But sweated, grunted, shouted View-haloo!
 And visions had of beaten Boers who'd pay
 In blood and tears and gold for the to-do
 They'd caused the Yiddish Empire. No one thought
 Of all the men who'd starved and died and fought.

The drunken Falstaff whom our boys had met
 Like Pains and Hal in Lyons' famous golden
 And gorgonzola halls refused to let
 Them go but laboured to embolden
 Their ardent spirits till they should forget
 Themselves in something worthy of the olden
 Romances of the days before the pious
 Victoria and Albert could belie us.

A vat of scandal was this hoary fool,
 A remnant of the *Pink-un's* palmy days
 When Corlett, Wilde and Pitcher held their school,
 Instructing youth in gaiety and ways
 Of stirring mud up in the stagnant pool
 Of London. He was loudest in his praise
 Of Edward Prince of Wales, who he averred
 Would soon have London from its slumber stirred.

Its slumber? God! Was this then London's sleep,
 This nightmare of a world of whores and knaves
 Whom nothing from their villainy could keep
 While thousands yonder mouldered in their graves?
 The contrast suddenly made Noel weep
 To see how an Imperial race behaves
 When drunk with such a tiny victory
 A thousand leagues away across the sea.

He wept, and Falstaff left him in disgust.
 His tears fell quickly down his pasteboard nose.
 His grief was all the keener for the lust
 Around him and the yells that still arose,
 The smells, the fleshy arms and breasts that thrust
 Themselves upon his senses till his clothes
 Imprisoned him and clung until he felt
 His world and he in such a heat must melt.

Upon his arm a gentle hand was laid,
 A sweet deep voice breathed comfort in his ear.
 "You must not cry," it said, "nor be afraid.
 The end of all this horror must be near."
 He turned and saw in domino a maid
 Who gazed reproach at him with eyes severe
 Yet gentle, and so steady that he shook
 His horror off and what she gave he took—

Her hand: a small firm hand that gripped
 His tightly and then modestly withdrew.
 Away she turned and through the throng she slipped,
 While Noel followed, keeping her in view.
 Away she went and down the stairs she tripped,
 He after, half believing that he knew
 Her, though he could not say her name or where
 In all his life he'd met a soul so rare.

He caught her up and they together plunged
 Into the howling herd that filled the streets.
 To be with her! To be with her! He lunged
 Unconsciously and while his glad heart beats
 In recognition his poor mind is sponged
 Of memory, though his passion stirs and heats
 The funeral baked meats that as a boy
 He fed upon to mourn his murdered joy.

She told him how she'd come out with a party
 To see Great Britain greatly triumph in
 Her victory. Her escort was a hearty,
 Respectable solicitor, whose thin
 And virtuous wife was angular and arty,
 Robed all in green, dependent on a pin.
 Affrighted by the mob, this lady fled
 And left her charge alone. Need more be said?

As she was lovely, dark and very pale
 Save for the flush that tinged her ivory,
 Her beauty was as moving as her tale,
 And Noel's heart grew big with sympathy.
 Such eyes and lips as hers could hardly fail
 To melt a tougher customer than he.
 He told her she need have no smallest fear
 For he that night would be her cavalier.

He slipped away with her and with her hand
 Tucked in his arm they wandered through the streets,
 And every now and then they took their stand
 And watched the mob perform amazing feats
 Of drunken folly, long since out of hand,
 Completely maddened by the printed sheets
 Which made them think the war was justified
 In this debauch of patriotic pride.

Their ears were deafened by the ceaseless roar.
 The mob was like a sea about a wreck
 Tossed up and battered on a sandy shore,
 Or like a brackish flooded mountain beck
 Hurling itself upon a threshing-floor,
 Or like a swarm of rats upon the deck
 Of a great ship with fire in the hold
 Upon a sea wind-swept and icy cold.

Their eyes were aching with the waving flags,
 The glaring lights, the moving sea of faces,
 And Noel felt his soul was torn to rags
 To see the patient mob kick o'er the traces
 What time the linkèd chain of order sags,
 And ancient idols totter in their places.
 The night that saw this bawdy rowdy fun done
 Enthroned King Mob as ruler over London.

And Noel took his false nose and his cap
 Of many colours and his bugle, and
 He laid them in his fair companion's lap
 As they were driving home, and in her hand
 He laid his cosy-sporran and its strap,
 And asked her if she'd try to understand
 That these were symbols of his vanished youth :
 Mementoes of the night when he met Truth.

"The Mob's a lie," he said, "and feeds on lies,
 For Love is truth and far too delicate
 To be held up for vulgar, greedy eyes
 Bedimmed with all the steamy mists of hate.
 Love's for the young, the good, the brave, the wise,
 The single-hearted who can bear to wait
 Alone if need be for the blessed thrill
 That comes with every kindling of the will.

"Here is no will, but only foul excitement.
 Acceptance of the bloody fragments flung
 Contemptuously down——" His hot indictment
 Burned up his words, and so he held his tongue,
 Not knowing what the things that crossed his sight meant.
 He tried to speak what could be only sung—
 That is, he mumbled vaguely of her kindness
 What time her eyes reproached him for his blindness.

She gathered up the bugle and the nose,
 The sporran and the cap and told the cabby
 To put her down, and when he stopped she rose.
 Then Noel's heart felt spongy, soft and flabby
 To see her going ere he could propose
 Another meeting. Yet he thought it shabby
 To force on her a friendship she'd no wish for.
 Too proud he was a hint from her to fish for.

“At least,” he said, “I think it is a shame
That you and I should part and go our ways
Without my having even learned your name.
You have my nose to mark this day of days,
But you are going even as you came.”
She smiled: “Young Noel ever ever stays
The same.” She disappeared. He recognised
His Katje in a domino disguised.

Katje in London! Katje in the whirl
Of fury let loose by the villainy
That slew her people! Katje, the Dutch girl
Whom he had lost so far across the sea.
Out from the cab did frantic Noel hurl
Himself, but she was lost. O misery!
“You bloody bilker,” said the irate cabby,
“It’s always gents as does the downright shabby.”

CANTO THREE

CANTO III

LONDON's my subject, London of the twilight
Of gods and kings and empires and the causes
For which men died in times before the dry light
Of commerce withered life. My Muse here pauses,
And dreads what London's gloom will do with my light.
But I don't care. The maker of my laws is
My conscience, and my Muse must stand with me
To watch the years of dying liberty.

Dear Muse, I know you long to take a flight
Above Parnassus on my poet's wings,
And so you shall when through the dreadful night
The dawn begins to peep and linnet sings
The new-born day. But first I have to fight
To cleanse my soul for what the new day brings.
O may it bring some joy on hellish earth
Where poets pine and bring no song to birth!

Katje had vanished. London was a tomb
Walled in with laws and law-books for my hero,
A dank and dark and dreary catacomb,
Where pleasure kept his spirits down at zero,
With tasteless work to aggravate his gloom,
And no relief save Carton, Jones, Pinero,
The ghostly drama of a ghostly time
All virgin-white with boredom's wintry rime.

O Kensington, O Bayswater, O Jail,
 Where all a nation's life and power are pent
 In padded ease, where spirits faint and fail
 And minds are drugged with so much increment
 Of wealth that, like the blubber of a whale,
 Keeps out the cold and in the discontent
 Which raises human beings to the level
 Where they're a match for life, God and the devil.

Polite the dinners, more polite the balls,
 Polite the fashionable music played,
 Polite the art, polite the hush that falls
 As titled ladies tastefully arrayed
 Arrive to dine or make their round of calls
 And ply the scandal which is all their trade.
 Polite their cunning and polite the skill
 With which they push their husbands through the mill.

From stifling house to stifling house in clothes
 Most elegant went Noel, though he knew
 Not why. Upon his head a shiny hat, his toes
 In shiny shoes, and gloves of dove-like hue
 Upon his hands, and linen white as snows
 Upon a mountain—Noel stood to view
 A dandy, like a wild rose in a green-house.
 The richest mansion seemed to him a mean house.

"This cannot last!" he gasped. "This cannot last!
 This gross plum-pudding of a life must break."
 He saw how men and women were held fast
 In keeping up appearance for the sake
 Of keeping up appearance, till a blast
 Of war or revolution should awake
 The minds so dull, the souls so somnolent
 In West End London comfortably pent.

They slept through war, they slumbered into peace
 While men were slain to keep the drowsy spell
 Unbroken and the ninety-nine years' lease
 Of Privilege unmortgaged, though all hell
 Should rise to bid such fatal stillness cease.
 The stillness rippled as a pebble fell,
 The stone of death which broke at last the scum,
 What time the air thrilled with the muffled drum.

Ind. Imp. et Dei. Gra. Fid. Def. et Brit.
 Omn. Reg. Victoria, like Mrs Jones
 The washerwoman, had at last to fit
 Into the end of all. She died. Her bones
 Must mingle with the earth to make of it
 New life to blossom from the barren stones.
 She died at peace, the famous Peace Britannic
 Imposed upon a universe volcanic.

She died at peace in sainted widowhood
 As she had lived. Her Virtue was so rare
 It hid all Evil in her realm, and Good
 Had reigned supreme for sixty years. (Compare
 Lord Tennyson with Shakespeare.) Virtue stood
 A marble monument against the wear and tear
 Of sixty years of squalid bargaining
 To make an Empire in a wedding ring.

She died in peace, but she had been so old
 So long that no one thought that she could die.
 Queens live for ever in the stories told
 To keep the gleam within a baby's eye.
 Yet queens are women and they cannot hold
 Their Virtue when the King of Death goes by.
 O day of wrath! O days and nights of mourning!
 Death for a moment stopped the people's yawning.

An old, old woman's body in a box
 Is drawn through London's streets, and tier on tier
 The people gape and gaze while Death unlocks
 The prison-gates of Virtue and Austere
 Morality, which made the spirit *Vox*
Et preterea nihil. On the bier
 Were drawn the keys of England's island prison
 Whereon at last had Freedom's sun arisen.

The wan light of this long-belated dawn
 Shone through the London murk upon a show
 Unrivalled. From remotest earth were drawn
 Into the trough of destiny (to throw
 Their princeliness before the bourgeois yawn)—
 Kings, emperors and rajahs, bending low
 Their heads in grief before the death of royalty
 Which also meant the obsequies of loyalty.

Sir Somerset and Noel in Whitehall,
 Hard by the place where royal Charles was slain,
 With mixed emotions watched the festival
 Of Death, who drenches life with slanting rain.
 Sir Somerset enjoyed the funeral
 As such, but Noel's heart with sudden pain
 Perceived the much that with the aged Queen
 Went down and was as it had never been.

They saw the heaped-up rows of pallid faces,
 The crowds fenced in with soldiers and police,
 While all the human pageant slowly paces
 In mourning for King Sailor Billy's niece.
 Her grooms and lackeys, secretaries, *saises*,
 All play their part in the romantic piece.
 But if there was a hero of that day
 'Twas Kaiser Wilhelm come his grief to pay.

The greatest actor on the human stage,
 Self-hypnotised, could hypnotise the throng
 To gaze in awe upon his equipage
 And uniform, to marvel and to long
 That this symbolic figure of the age
 Should be its Knight to free the world from wrong.
 A Parsifal was Wilhelm in his mail.
 With such an audience he could not fail.

So Wilhelm's art out-Beerbohmed Beerbohm Tree.
 Majestic, bowed, upon his steed he sat
 A man of marble, mute humility
 In royal grief. The proletariat
 Had more than they had bargained for to see.
 This marble monarch was worth gazing at.
 Aye, every inch a king, a dramatist,
 Theatrical emotions and mailed fist.

O Kaiser, Kaiser Wilhelm, did you dream
 That all your glory slipped into the tomb
 With grandmamma, and as she died the gleam
 Of liberty shot through her kingdom's gloom,
 And all the eager hopes that ever teem
 In human thought had ripened in the womb
 Of Time. O Kaiser, you were riding to
 Your grave that day although you little knew.

Salute the ages dead, the gathered treasure
 Nailed up in a box. Salute the grave
 Now dug to hold the ancient world whose measure
 At last is taken when no power can save
 It from the lust grown from its cult of pleasure,
 Which set at naught the sainted and the brave.
 Salute the nineteenth century whose whoredom
 Had gathered up a thousand ages' boredom.

Disgust and pity choked up Noel's breast
 To see so many thousands mourn for one,
 That one a symbol of the pious zest
 With which so many villainies were done
 By Palmerston and Dizzy and the rest
 Who found in Empire their religion
 And used the widowed Virtue of the Queen
 To keep the greenhorn British public green.

Disgust and pity irked him till he felt
 This was the end, the end made visible
 Of all the secret woe that Empire spelt
 For nameless millions burning in the hell
 Of their docility. And as the veldt
 Had swallowed up the lives of those who fell
 To bring forth gold, so here in England death
 Had ta'en the power that robbed them of their breath.

His thoughts now hovered round the central figure,
 The Kaiser Wilhelm, and there seemed to grow
 An aureole that made him still loom bigger.
 Symbolical and superhuman. So
 He rode towards the grave that Death, the digger,
 Had made for him and all his tribe to know,
 The tinsel ending of a golden dream
 Destroyed by Life where things are what they seem.

This drapery of death was so appalling
 To Noel that his world came crashing down,
 And with a dizzy sense of swiftly falling
 He felt that in the sea of life must drown
 His dearest hopes, since there was no forestalling
 The tragedy that hung o'er London Town.
 The muffled drums and grunting bands went by
 Bemoaning more than fallen majesty.

"With Virtue dead, then Love is dead, and dead
 Is Fancy." Such strange words as these took shape
 And knocked upon his emptied heart, and said
 In whispers, as his mind began to gape
 And crack beneath the pressure of his dread,
 "So lovelessly died Tarquin for his rape."
 Such twisted thoughts took shape within his brain
 As aged him years within a moment's pain.

But in that moment clear as dewdrop in
 A buttercup his thought within his soul
 Became a dream that sped his heart to win
 The grace that was his nature's destined goal,
 The grace that triumphs nobly over sin
 In suffering, and gives no petty toll
 To smug morality whose right and wrong
 Squeeze human hearts and break in them their song.

The Kaiser dwindled into something less
 Than man. The potentates and rajahs grew
 Downwards to dwarfish heights. The throng and press
 Expanded and cast off its sable hue
 To blaze in colour as its souls address
 Themselves to grace their lost life to renew.
 The pomp of royalty goes down to dust,
 The people's soul shakes off its age-long rust.

And Noel knew that no one knew but he
 The miracle enkindling all humanity
 Now it had broken with the century
 Which gloried in its virtuous inanity,
 Its hypocritic cult of liberty,
 But held the people slaves to its urbanity
 And substituted for the Christian myth
 The economic rules of Adam Smith.

Sir Somerset remarked that it was time
 To eat, and Noel's dewdrop vision faded,
 And left him slipping back into the slime
 Of London life, in work and pleasure jaded,—
 Unpromising material for rhyme,
 So thoroughly was human life degraded
 To appetites and senses, and no more
 With mind and soul left hungering and sore.

“My boy,” said old Sir Somerset, “the King
 Will stir us up and we shall have a Court
 That will not slay our pleasures on the wing.”
 And Noel nodded gloomily. That sort
 Of leering hope was most unpromising
 To him who saw in Britain now a fort
 Where Liberty at last would be defended,
 Now that the day of kings and priests was ended.

Sir Somerset that day had caught a cold.
 His homage to the Age Victorian
 Cost him his life. No more would he unfold
 To Briton, Brahmin and West Indian
 The mysteries of tort or copyhold,
 No more be marked as the most learned man
 About the Temple or the Law Courts. He
 Left Noel as his only legatee,

A house in Kensington, a shooting box
 In Scotland, slum property in Leeds,
 A hundred thousand pounds in divers stocks
 And shares, rooms full of books and screeds
 Of manuscripts, an essay on “John Knox
 And Education,” mortgages and deeds,
 Insignia of orders, and degrees,
 A cellar full of port, the cellar's keys,

Plate, furniture, and linen ; a collection
 Of drawings by Rossetti and Burne-Jones
 And Madox Brown, in whom Art reached perfection
 For old Sir Somerset, who spoke of them in tones
 Of awe, as one might speak of a connection
 With saints and angels on their golden thrones.
 Pre-Raphaelite, the Chelsea coterie
 In Art were Noel's uncle's Q.E.D.

With wealth, a famous name, a hero's lustre
 About his parentage, romance to give
 The final touch to Noel's noble muster
 Of qualities entitling him to live
 The gay existence of a London buster,
 One lack made all his fortune like a sieve
 Through which his passion trickled. He had lost
 The love wherewith he could his fate accost.

His mother wished her boy to make a stir,
 To marry some fair maid who, being trained
 In social climbing, would comply with her
 In making Noel do what he disdained
 And lick the boots of those who can confer
 Position on the rich whose wealth has gained
 For them the outer courts of the great portals
 For ever closed to poor but honest mortals.

Mammas propose, but married women dish
 Both them and God's disposal of young men.
 In London, though a bachelor may wish
 To live like a well-ordered citizen,
 He's like an open oyster to the fish
 In clusters waiting for the moment when
 The hapless mollusc leaves himself exposed—
 A swoop, a gulp, the oyster's tale is closed.

Wealth, fame, distinction or an honoured name,
 These women covet as they ache for pearls
 To make themselves successful in the game
 From which they are excluded as mere girls
 Until they're married, when they lose all shame,
 And as the Season seizes them and whirls
 Them on, they gather up their stolen spoils :
 Clothes, money, jewels, men within their toils.

Good-naturedly, as Ellen drove him on,
 Young Noel let himself be drawn into
 The rout and half forgot his vision,
 So many were the pleasures of the few.
 His love with Katje seemed for ever gone.
 It mattered little what he chose to do.
 He danced and dined and stayed in country houses,
 Indulging there in sundry wild carouses.

His friends were guardsmen, and he stayed with them,
 Played polo, gambled, ragged and bullied toughs
 Gazetted by mistake, nor tried to stem
 The wildness that recalled to mind the roughs
 Let loose the night that broke the British phlegm,
 And set the nation turning back its cuffs
 To take it out of someone for the slight
 The Boers had put upon Great Britain's might.

The King, as Noel's uncle prophesied,
 Installed a Court of Jewish millionaires
 Who saw good business in such regicide
 And shortly held the nation by the hairs.
 It had to take what *they* chose to provide.
 Low life they let appear above the stairs,
 And Jews who'd gone to Africa by steerage
 Now bought themselves a place in Britain's Peerage.

With low life surging like a dirty flood,
 It seemed that none now cared to stay at home.
 Unresting feet ploughed through the city's mud.
 At night the lights put out the starry dome,
 And none had leisure now to chew the cud
 Of thought, but all were drawn into the foam
 And dirty froth churned by the brimming river
 That drowned the landmarks of old days for ever.

But on his raft of money Noel floated
 And unmoved saw Old England slowly drown.
 Each Honour as it sank he duly noted
 And doffed his hat to its decayed renown,
 The Monarchy, the House of Lords, the doted
 Authority that governed London Town,
 The ancient laws, the constitution crumbling,
 The ruined fabric tottering and tumbling.

And he enjoyed it much as he enjoyed
 In Africa the sight of ant-heaps washed
 Away by rain. If it could be destroyed,
 If it was so defiled and so deboshed
 That only money kept its parts upbuoyed,
 Then it was surely time its power was squashed
 Before corruption spread to bring dismay
 To life elsewhere more worthy of the day.

This was his deep impression, but he needed
 A knowledge more precise before he plunged.
 His mother worried much, and often pleaded
 With him to rid himself of those who sponged
 Upon his generosity. He weeded
 His large acquaintance out but always lunged
 Away from marriage, which his mother hoped
 Would settle him. He would not, and she moped.

He said : " Dear mother, mother of my soul,
 Who made me free and brought me up to hate
 The code of modern morals and the whole
 Fantastic fabric of the modern state,
 Now leave me free to drive towards my goal,
 To be the lord and master of my fate,
 And not the puppet of the notoriety
 Which animates this half-effete society.

" In Africa we kindled to the sun
 And from the earth drew sweetest nourishment
 For body, mind and soul, but here is none.
 Here are all three in huddled masses pent.
 The Trinity is never clearly One.
 Its force is lost in fruitless argument.
 And marriage here as far as I can see
 Means Woman added to the Trinity."

Strange words that Ellen hardly understood.
 A pardoned rebel, she could tolerate
 The very things, in her rich widowhood,
 That, as a wife, she fiercely used to hate,
 And even in the vilest saw some good.
 She did not wish her son to isolate
 Himself when all the world was at his nod
 And he could live at peace with man and God.

The house in Kensington was open day
 And night, and guardsmen, barristers and actors,
 Young literary men all whiled away
 Their too great leisure. Sons of rich contractors,
 At Eton varnished, brought their ladies gay
 To drink Champagne and Cognac, those great factors
 In every walk of moneyed London life,
 The rich man's Beer, for which he starves his wife.

And soon the house in Kensington outvied
 The Continental as a rendezvous.
 It seemed to Ellen social suicide,
 But Noel said: "In Britain one must do
 As Britons do." Heart-broken, Ellen cried:
 "They are not frank, and with your frankness you
 Will come to ruin. These poor wretches know
 The line that's drawn and farther do not go."

The women tried in vain to catch their young
 Mæcnas, so romantic, handsome, rich.
 In deed so reckless, yet he was in tongue
 Most guarded, and the women knew not which
 He was, a cynic or an idiot who flung
 His wealth about to ease the spending itch.
 He moved among them silent, pale and kind,
 And hated most in them their lack of mind.

But nowhere could he ease the aching passion
 That throbbed in him and twinged for lack of dreams
 And purpose that should dominate the fashion,
 Not follow it and pleasure's fitful gleams.
 "Give me an aim," he cried, "and I will dash on
 Until 'tis won, and beauty no more seems
 To be, but is." His cry of passion uttered
 What every heart in London inly muttered.

He loved this London, sprawling, helpless, mean,
 So accidental, vague, so kindly-cruel,
 So comic that the very air's serene
 With humour, the surprising lovely jewel
 Within the toad-like head. O! ne'er was seen
 So vast a joke, and this was all the fuel
 That Noel's passion found in London's magic.
 A joke! The flower of generations tragic.

Its perfume sweetened all, the Jewish Court,
 The ponderous submission to the law,
 The law's practitioners, the last resort
 Of scoundrels, patriotism, the raw
 And raucous newspapers, the lowest sort
 Of entertainments, the undue awe
 Accorded to play-actors, journalists
 And men whose fame was in their padded fists.

When Wordsworth lived the nation loved its Tupper.
 Now Tuppers bloomed and Wordsworth was there none.
 The feast of letters looked like a Last Supper
 Without its central figure. There'd begun
 An inky orgy which begrimed the upper
 And educated classes till they run
 And read, and run, and reading run until
 They have nor mind, nor hope, nor faith, nor will.

This was the greatest joke of all that men
 With Shakespeare, Milton, Newton, Shelley,
 Keats, Johnson, Dryden, Fielding, William Penn,
 Swift and Defoe to guide them should a belly
 Full of wind prefer, and breaking from their den,
 Their towns so reeking, smoke-begrimed and smelly,
 Turn to a Harmsworth as their guide and friend,
 To learn destruction when 'twas time to mend.

And no one saw the joke but Noel, whom
 It hurt and yet delighted. No one minded.
 And no one saw the clouds that he saw loom
 Out of this joke, for everyone was blinded
 By what seemed light after the three years' gloom
 Of war, for no one wished to be reminded
 Of that mistake which almost turned the joke
 Into a nightmare which the sleeper woke.

“There’ll be no war as long as we’ve a king
 Like good King Edward.” There’ll be war
 As long as there are Harmsworths mafficking
 From day to day in print and Britons are
 So foolish as to think that when they sing
 Their *Rule, Britannia* there’s a special star
 To which their waggon’s hitched to pull them through
 And keep them ignorant of what they do.

To see the soft spring light on London’s spires,
 Or touch to opal waves on tidal Thames,
 Green buds on blackened trees! In all the shires,
 Though every one contains a thousand gems
 Of landscape, nothing so fulfils desires
 Of hearts for home as spring with diadems
 Of green and gold renewing ecstasy
 In ancient London’s heaped-up misery.

Perceiving this at last in Noel broke
 His frozen passion into streams of laughter
 Delirious, and the joy in him awoke
 And made him see at last what he was after,
 To see that London’s grim and deadly joke
 Should blossom into joy to thwart the grafter,
 The millionaire, the hack, who use the Press
 To draw their profit from the public mess.

Perceiving this, to Ellen’s joy, he cast out
 The rowdy crew who battered on his folly.
 He said he wanted something that would last out
 The seasons from the primrose to the holly.
 “I’ll be,” he cried, “a real iconoclast out
 Of joy and not from bilious melancholy.”
 But in his image-breaking first went down
 Poor Ellen’s dreams for him in London Town.

A Mrs Clement-Cluny smelt him out
 As cats smell fish, and filched him like a cat ;
 And of her aims gave him so little doubt
 That he'd no notion what she would be at.
 She took him everywhere with her about,
 And made him help to furnish her new flat.
 The story is so usual, so trite,
 'Tis hardly worth the time it takes to write.

A nation must be judged by what it makes
 Of women, and the Clement-Clunys swarm
 In London Town : an empty heart that aches,
 A busy mindless brain, a body warm
 With sensual desire, an eye that fakes
 The light of passion, promising a storm
 Where there is only darkness and the dust
 Of egoism crumbled into lust.

"Let her not draw thee with her eyelids." Old
 Advice from Solomon the Wise, but still
 Adulterous women keep their strangle-hold
 On life, and still keep stealthy watch to kill
 Youth, charm and force and all that makes men bold
 To follow dreams and passion's windy will.
 "Youth, youth, be mine," cry women as they fade.
 Their touch on youth makes life itself decayed.

"Youth, youth, be mine," and chivalrous bright youth
 Hears in the cry a lady in distress.
 "Be young with me," and melting into ruth
 Youth rushes down into the sordid mess
 That women make through being dead to truth,
 To beauty blind in their vast selfishness.
 So Noel rushed and let his springful blood
 Be sucked out by a vampire in the mud.

A vampire Mrs Clement-Cluny was,
 But very charming, and good company.
 She knew her world and was a candid glass
 To all its tricks and bland hypocrisy.
 Musicians, artists, actor-people pass
 Through lives like hers and learn the knavery
 Without which Art's forgotten in the race
 For good positions in the market-place.

So charming was she that her lovers stayed
 To be her friends when mimic love was broken
 And Fancy to another pasture strayed,
 Where eyes and lips say what is never spoken
 Since they can lie when tongue is still afraid.
 Yet friendliness with her remained the token
 Of some cold honesty that in her tricks
 Contrived a chill affection still to mix.

She lived for intrigue. Intrigue was to her
 A deeper passion than true love's delight.
 In politics, in art, the theatre,
 And even church affairs she'd won the right
 Of entry, and the rich financier,
 Her husband, who made money day and night,
 Consulted her and used her as his spy
 To watch each movement as it rippled by.

She travelled much and netted fish in Rome,
 In Paris and New York, and everywhere
 She went she made herself no less at home
 By intrigue than in London. By means fair
 Or foul she broached the brimming honeycomb
 Of luxury which she could not forbear.
 When youth is gone then luxury tastes bitter,
 And aching nerves begin to twinge and twitter.

"Youth, youth, be mine." Poor Noel, like so many,
 Obligated politely out of youth's excess,
 Instead of saying : "Madam, I've not any,"
 Like Simple Simon, to the wickedness
 Of such commercial persons. He'd the penny
 That Mrs Clement-Cluny wished to press
 Into the hand of Time, whose threatened scythe
 Made all the woman in her quail and writhe.

Fleeing from Time, she hurled herself at Noel
 With such a fury as to send him spinning.
 His faculty of reason could not go well
 Enough to help him baffle her in winning
 With arts that he knew not and she must know well
 In her much practice in that kind of sinning.
 Her desperation woke in him a kind
 Of passion which flamed up and made him blind.

He could not see that she had lost her soul
 And wanted his to keep herself from dying
 The moral death which gnawed a gaping hole
 In her existence. There was no denying
 The damage slowly wrought. Age like a mole
 Had sapped her, while her frenzied lust of buying,
 Intriguing, bargaining and pulling wires
 Had choked with dust her passion's waning fires.

The flame in Noel, steeped in Afric's sun,
 Blazed through her, borne on winds of chivalry.
 And what began as mild flirtation
 Grew to a storm of sensuality.
 But for the first time it contained no fun
 For her, so near to love and liberty,
 Yet too, too far, for living words he said
 But made her know how nearly she was dead.

With painted eyes and artfully tinged cheeks,
 A powdered bosom and a massaged throat,
 Hair subtly trimmed, hair washed until it reeks
 Of Morny, so she keeps herself afloat
 Upon hot youth's illusions. When he speaks
 Of love and freedom, all he says by rote
 She learns, and seems before himself to know
 The thing he means or meant once long ago.

Into her voice a flute-like note of joy,
 Or something very like it, throbs and thrills
 For him and him alone. Lest it should cloy
 It breaks into a happy song that spills
 In pleasure for her fire-bringing boy
 On anything that his attention fills—
 A glass of wine, a book, a merry tune,
 The muffins of a winter afternoon.

She gave him presents which he pocketed
 In half annoyance, for they did not bring
 The gift for which he'd raised her from the dead,
 The song of joy he hoped to hear her sing
 Before her chance of it for ever sped
 Down the dark void where each forgotten thing
 In darkness fades and dwindles into shame
 That it has lived but never burst in flame.

The obstinacy of his youth had mastered
 His will until, self-hypnotised, he strove
 To crack the lies with which her soul was plastered
 And make it yield to him its treasure trove.
 In vain, poor youth, he listened and at last heard
 Her true note through the spells she subtly wove,
 A harsh cracked note of jealous black despair
 That wheresoe'er she went befouled the air.

Jealous she was of everything he wore,
 Jealous of friends, acquaintances and kin,
 Jealous of deeds both after and before,
 Jealous of thought, of all he hoped to win,
 Jealous of all that hurt and made him sore,
 Jealous of love, that triumphed over sin
 And let him go in youth's abounding grace
 And left her gazing at her haggard face.

One day, returning home, he found a letter
 From Germany and opened it to find
 Five words from Katje saying she'd thought better
 Of her vowed silence. Darkness from his mind
 Rolled like a curtain. How could he forget her?
 "Katje, Katje, true love in you was kind.
 No jealous fury froze the living soul
 And turned the burning heart to blackened coal."

Alas! the letter gave him no address,
 No clue to where she was, save by the stamp.
 And that was Marburg. Five short words could bless
 His wounded spirit and relight the lamp
 Of love to show him all his soul's distress,
 This dark corruption of the cellar damp
 Of London love and mimicry of passion
 That women use to keep themselves in fashion.

"I'll tell her," Noel thought, with simple trust,
 "That I'm in love, and always shall be so,
 With Katje and I must do what I must.
 She's old enough to understand and know
 That we have had a strange spasmodic gust
 Which could not last, and she will let me go."
 So simply thought, so simply did the youth,
 Not having learned that women hate the truth.

He learned it quickly through the jealous fury
 With which the lady greeted what he said.
 A Russian pogrom in a shrieking Jewry
 Is not more cruel than the vengeance fed
 By Jealousy, and dramas at Old Drury
 Are tame beside the passions nourished
 By false love scorned when shown up by the true—
 Though happily such cases are but few.

But this was one of them, and Noel found
 Himself involved in such a knotted skein
 Of lives as made him feel the ground
 Must open up and swallow him. So vain
 Were all his efforts that he only wound
 The skein so tight that trebled was his pain,
 Quadrupled hers, who lost her ancient skill
 And, losing that, went fiercely out to kill.

Her memories of mimic love all faded,
 Her triumphs into yellow ashes crumbled,
 Each seemed a step by which her life had faded
 Into the nothing into which 'twas tumbled.
 Up to her knees in mud and mire she waded,
 And vowed she'd never rest until she'd humbled
 The man, the men who'd brought her down so low.
 Such debts as these she fiercely scorned to owe.

She'd pay in full, and Noel should not win
 The girl whose letter more to him had proved
 Than all the gifts she'd made to keep him in
 The state of mind that made him think he loved
 Herself, though the illusion was but thin.
 Swept on by fury mindlessly she moved,
 And quarrelled with her husband till he lost
 All patience, plunged and made her pay the cost.

He'd waited long for just such evidence
 As Noel's rashness gave him in full measure.
 He'd waited long and slyly. Common-sense
 Will always wait to steal upon the treasure
 Of joy when it ignores the moral fence
 Set up about the cheapest human pleasure.
 For common-sense, like Kipling with his lay,
 Cries ever to the joyous: "Pay, pay, pay."

Divorce, a scandal, withered Ellen's hope,
 And like a tigress in she plunged to save
 Her boy from toppling further down the slope
 On which he stood into the yawning grave
 Of loveless marriage, which had been the rope
 That twice had strangled her. A narrow shave
 Had Noel, for his chivalry inflamed
 Exposed him to the Cluny still untamed.

The Cluny thought she had him in her net,
 But Ellen tamed her, made her face the fact
 That she had got to take what she could get.
 Noel would see to it she never lacked
 And he would pay for having so upset
 Her apple-cart. The Cluny loudly smacked
 Her hands together, wept and ran through all
 Her repertoire of tricks theatrical.

But she accepted, and she disappeared,
 And Noel hugged his misery and shame,
 And counted up the wreckage where he feared
 Love's rose would never blossom like a flame.
 Why was it that his spirit always steered
 His life upon the rocks? What was this game
 Of London life, with complicated rules,
 To help the knaves to prey upon the fools?

And Mrs Clement-Cluny symbolised
 For him this London with its lingerie,
 Its restaurants, its misery disguised
 In splendour and respectability.
 A savage, bitter woman! So he sized
 His London up, and then he felt more free
 To start again upon the quest of joy
 That kept him through disaster still a boy.

"I will not marry," so he told his mother.
 "My heart is Katje's, and without my heart
 I will not share my life with any other.
 Though Katje's gone, yet I am still a part
 Of her, and Time will never, never smother
 The love we share and have shared from the start
 Of our young lives out there where love could be
 Before her people lost their liberty.

"In me I feel their freedom lives again,
 In me for her, and that is now my gesture,
 Here to revive the freedom that was slain
 In Africa. Though often I've distressed your
 Kind mother's heart, and tortured it with pain,
 I've not been blind, and often I have guessed your
 Distress, but now at last I see quite clearly
 What I've been up to when I've acted queerly.

"Don't be alarmed, dear mother, if I act
 More queerly yet. The river still must flow
 Upon its course, and every cataract
 Must reach smooth water somewhere. So I go
 Through London's fiction looking out for fact,
 The rock beneath the mountain's ice and snow.
 Dear mother, though I'm bitten by the frost
 Of Mrs Clement-Cluny, I'm not lost."

His mother kissed him and her benison
 She gave, and told her troubled heart the fault
 Was hers if any, and she counted on
 The lesson he had learned on this sharp halt.
 His happiness was all the sun that shone
 Upon her life, his joy its only salt.
 That he was in extremest misery
 She could not see, nor could he let her see.

The laws of England keep alive a race
 Of men as cloistered as the monks of old.
 The Temple is the still monastic place
 Where brains grow dry and hearts grow weak and cold,
 And withered passion greys the weary face
 That cannot kindle even over gold.
 This race of men can either earn no bread
 Or have no time or zest for being fed.

The glib of tongue go into politics.
 The thoughtful climb and cannot see beyond
 The Bench or County Court. The dullard sticks
 In chambers like a leaf upon a pond.
 Briefs, wigs and gowns, gowns, wigs and briefs, the tricks
 Of this most doleful trade make the despond
 In which is sunk Great Britain's ancient power
 On which the brewing storm-clouds loom and lour.

"Good-bye," said Noel to the Temple when
 His eyes were opened as I have narrated,
 Good-bye to all the grey and parchment men
 Upon whose life my pen has here dilated;
 Good-bye to briefs and dust, good-bye again
 To hopes of being dull and celebrated
 For helping knaves to circumvent the law
 And honest men to writhe beneath its paw.

Good-bye, dear Law Courts, with your empty hall
 Symbolical of Nothing. O good-bye !
 Great Rufus, greater Danckwerts, Marshall Hall
 And Eldon Bankes, long may your greatness lie
 Unruffled : and, ye Benchers, ye who call
 Young men within the Bar that youth may die,
 A long farewell. You fatten in your Inns
 Upon an ancient nation's hoard of sins.

For what is law but sin legitimate
 By purchase? Said Noel : " I will sin,
 If sin I must, as I will love and hate,
 In Freedom, and that Freedom will I win
 By no vile homage to a tricked-out State,
 Through dusty lawyers who have wriggled in
 To what is left of a forgotten Church ;
 Dead long ago and long left in the lurch.

" Farewell, you lawyers, who attempt to rule
 Without authority but by your wits.
 Farewell, a long farewell, another school
 I seek that teaches wisdom unto its
 Devout by holding up the clever fool
 To scorn before the throne where Wisdom sits.
 That throne's the heart of man, whose majesty
 Gives man's usurping code of Law the lie."

The corpse of poor Sir Somerset within
 Its grave must then have turned to hear his heir
 So speak, as though the Law itself were sin.
 But so it is, as Noel in his debonair
 And happy insight knew. He gave a grin
 To think how he'd have made his uncle's hair
 Stand up on end to hear such blasphemy
 Upon the Law's respectability.

The Lord Chief Justice and the Chancellor,
 The Master of the Rolls, Lords Justices,
 The Justices and the Solicitor-
 And the Attorney-General—are these
 Well-paid officials really hired for
 Their kindly keeping of our consciences?
 Of course not. They're to oil the wheels for us
 To sin and have the minimum of fuss.

Good-bye then to the Law. That is the net
 In which the British mind is caught and trapped.
 Not so my Noel. He could never let
 The thread between himself and Truth be snapped,
 Nor in the common falsehood could forget
 The Love that lived when lawful Britons scrapped
 The free Republics of the peaceful Dutch,
 Who gained their all in grimly losing much.

East from the Temple Fleet Street runs with ink,
 And eastward turned my Noel from the West,
 Where men in lewdness lose the power to think,
 And losing that are dead to all the rest.
 He could not learn like them to grin and blink
 At half the nation being dispossessed
 To choke the other half with monstrous wealth
 Which leaves no room for spiritual health.

He bought a paper which was derelict,
 And published it on Wednesday afternoons.
 His Editor he very wisely picked,
 One Rubio, who'd learned his job with Newnes
 And sickened of the daily interdict
 Upon his brains, that still had left some tunes
 Of wit and humour from the weary round
 That almost had his soul to Tit-Bits ground.

This man, a Jew, adored his master and
 Gainsaid him never when he had his fling,
 Although he could not wholly understand
 Why Noel should so joyfully take wing
 Upon his weekly flights when no demand
 Was made for thoughts as fragrant as the spring.
 But Noel loved his paper and the fun
 Of letting all his hoarded fancies run.

The paper fairly soon began to sell,
 And Rubio in time began to see,
 But faintly, what his master had to tell
 The British public in its majesty
 New-found and vaunted by the miracle
 Of papers printed by machinery
 In thousands, millions, scattered far and wide
 By special trains for mental suicide.

And Noel even met the great assassin
 Who murdered mind with cheaply printed sheets
 And would not suffer living thought to pass in
 To his excitement which not even Keats
 Or Shelley could have borne, though there was gas in
 Plenty in their day, 'gainst which the spirit beats
 Its power, its song until its music rises
 Above the din and heaven's gate surprises.

There was a frenzy in this man to get
 In QUICK before the people could begin
 To think, for if they did they would upset
 The goal he'd marked out for himself to win,
 To hustle, hustle, and to know no let
 Until his house became the dorsal fin
 Upon the gudgeon's back. And no one knew
 But Noel what this man proposed to do.

To hustle, hustle, till his circulation
 Reached figures never dreamed of in the Street.
 To hustle, hustle, till the British nation
 Could hardly tell its brain-pan from its feet.
 To hustle, hustle, till in desperation
 The lawyers in the Temple would be beat.
 Aye, even they with all their supple cunning
 Would have to read as they were kept a-running.

This was a lovely game for Noel, this
 Perception of what things were going on
 Beneath the surface of great London's bliss
 In its Imperial religion,
 This solitary glimpse down the abyss
 Where never sun nor moon nor stars had shone,
 And all was dark as hell save for the heat
 That lit the lamps for Harmsworth in the Street.

From Westminster authority had fled
 Unto the Law, and lawyers made their profit
 Like leeches sucking at a man nigh dead
 Until the blast of war just blew them off it.
 And blew them East where men who still saw red
 Pounced on the remnant, gulped and would not cough it
 Up. O lovely game, O grimmest of grim jokes,
 What time the unled herd sweats, steams and smokes,

And Noel with his paper pointed out
 These things, but no one heeded what he cried.
 At Westminster was gathered up a rout
 To wrangle over details and the pride
 Of certain classes to maintain without
 Suspecting that the thing they loved had died.
 The stair that lawyers climbed had broken down,
 Now none could win but all must steal renown.

None had renown by birth ; that much was settled.
 And none was great but by the British Press.
 "This cannot work," said Noel, somewhat nettled
 To see fools strutting in their paper dress.
 But work it did, and those too highly mettled
 To cringe were voices in the wilderness.
 Voices there were of every timbre and tone,
 But none were heard but through the megaphone.

All night machines thumped out the daily hash.
 And brains were pulped to give it spice and bite.
 The newsboys through the traffic dart and dash
 To feed the gaping public's appetite
 For winners, crimes, at best a railway smash
 Now that the thrill of war is out of sight.
 All night machines grind out their late editions,
 As later on machines ground out munitions.

Bow down, bow down, before the god Machine
 That gathers up so many human lives
 And grinds to dust the glory that has been,
 And makes men live like slavish bees in hives :
 Like wretched bees who've hived without a queen,
 So that their laws are manacles and gyves
 About them, since they cannot face the light
 To rise superbly on the marriage flight.

This then was England, a poor hive of drones,
 Drone, droning on in blind obedience,
 Like a poor beggar hammering his stones
 Eight hours a day against a wooden fence,
 To keep existence in his skin and bones
 And spend on beer his hard-earned eighteen-pence.
 Now Noel heard the megaphonic voice
 And knew that poor old England had no choice.

Katje had said the dead would rise and cry
 For vengeance to be wrung a thousand-fold,
 To pay the cost of Britain's victory.
 Would Death then cry his vengeance on the old ?
 This poor old man, too old for liberty,
 Too old for aught but to be bought and sold,
 Too old for aught but for his meagre cheer
 In selling labour for a pint of beer.

Ind Coope is good, and Worthington is good,
 And Bass is elegant, and Allsopp's mild,
 A carter's pint is always understood
 Where argument and sense seem vague and wild.
 Beer is the British worker's homely food,
 Therein are contradictions reconciled.
 Beer, glorious beer, is more than food for thought,
 'Tis thought itself, the thing that feareth naught.

The solid thought of Britain is all beer.
 Outside there are anæmic nimble minds
 Which waste themselves in their attempt to steer
 Their little boats through all the shifting winds
 What time the barrel-hulk contrives to veer
 In solemn sluggish safety through all kinds
 Of weather. I can't keep this up for long.
 My Muse says: "Poet, tune thy soul to song."

I'll sing of beer, but think it I will not,
 Nor will my Noel, as we go up West
 To find out what there is to stop the rot
 Among the educated whose behest
 Has still some weight until the iron's hot
 Wherewith the rich shall blind the dispossessed.
 Did no one know what villainy was brewing,
 Or what in all this vat of life was stewing ?

No. No one. Those were days of empty fooling
 In life as on the stage, where Bernard Shaw
 Began to put the nation through its schooling
 For its revolt—in time—against the law
 And rulers who had no idea of ruling
 And yet could not suspect there was a flaw
 In their capacity which won them votes
 On which their thought still dwells and fondly dotes.

Wast never at the Court? Then thou art damned.
 With Rubio my Noel paid his court
 To something almost art, where others shammed
 And made the theatre the last resort
 Of gambling commerce. Here the plays were crammed
 With so much styleless talk that the report
 Of wit in it was like a pistol shot
 Which galvanised what else was platform rot.

It came from much debating in societies.
 Behind it was a life of scores of scores,
 And Bernard Shaw topped all the notorieties
 And skittles played with old established bores
 Who writhed beneath his impudent impieties
 Which broke upon their orchestrated snores.
 They growled and grumbled, but at last success
 Made popular the famous G. B. S.

O Pierrot! O Faun! So Walkley wrote.
 O mischievous, say I, O wanton wag
 Upon whose wit no other mind can float!
 O solitary boy set out to drag
 The over-grown-up English down, thy note
 Was still too thin to reach them as they lag
 Behind the world in art and thought and drama
 Through gazing on their Empire's panorama.

O Pierrot! O Faun! O Irish Bishop!
 (For such you might have been) I here salute
 You as my vagrant pen runs on to dish up
 The work that won you fame and good repute.
 You angled long. At last you brought your fish up
 And bought yourself another Jaeger suit.
 With *Man and Superman* you conquered men,
 With help from Granville Barker and Vedrenne.

The Court was like a little winking star
 In evening darkness in an autumn wood
 Full of corruption, where the lichens mar
 The sturdy trees that have for ages stood.
 But mildew, moss and blighting fungus are
 Too strong at last. The earth has no more good
 To give in sap. Here life is at its ebb.
 The busy spider weaves its mourning web.

Clear dewy drops upon the web do shine,
 And shines the star through trellised twigs and leaves,
 But no wind stirs and no bird pours the wine
 Of song upon the soul as here it grieves
 And through a mist of tears sees the divine
 Eternal message of the star that cleaves
 Its way through spider-threads that hold the wood
 In the foul spell of dank decrepitude.

The star winked laughter to the tortured soul
 To bid it not to weep and add its tears
 To so much moisture, but to play the rôle
 Assigned to humankind, beset with fears,
 Yet ever beckoned to the hero's goal,
 The silence broken only by the shears
 Of Clotho, and beyond that to the place
 Where stars are torches for a deathless race.

So Noel thought and so told Rubio,
 Who thought his master was a little cracked.
 "We laugh at this to stop the coming flow
 Of tears," said Noel. "We have been attacked
 By worse than mildew, and our spiders grow
 The fatter while our treasure is ransacked."
 Said Rubio: "This kills the problem play.
 Pinero, Jones & Co. have had their day."

"This is the knot," said Noel inly musing,
 "That ends a great tradition, this the laughter
 In which a man seeks comfort when he's losing
 His fight against the gods and sees thereafter
 No hope but that his sons may find amusing
 The story of his toil on which the grafter,
 The human spider, fastens in his labour
 To break the bonds that bind man to his neighbour."

A small event may in its hidden meaning
 Reveal an age, so Noel pondered long
 What time his soul was delicately weaning
 His passion's hope from London's motley throng
 Since now it had no hope of ever gleaming
 Therefrom its longed-for harvest of clear song.
 So round the Court my Noel's fancy played
 And had its purport measured up and weighed.

In wit as sore as that of Beaumarchais
 Great London gave its ghost, in stone its pride.
 The Mall with fancies haunted of the day
 Of Congreve, Wycherley and Vanbrugh died
 And was entombed in a Triumphal Way
 Down which King Edward and his Jews should ride
 In moneyed peace and popularity
 While England multiplied her ships at sea.

King Edward might forget the war, but not so
 The yeasty Harmsworth raising Standard Bread.
 The paper-eating Baronet had got so
 Enamoured of the map all painted red
 That he was out to keep the public hot so
 Long as there were pockets to be bled.
 He screamed for war with France, but Edward Rex
 Wooed Paris with his knowledge of the sex.

Vive Edouard le Roi, le gros bonhomme,
Vive l'Entente Cordiale, à bas Fashoda,
 Conspuez Harmsworth, who with great aplomb
 Thinned down his blood with quantities of soda,
 Seltzer and blood! He hurled his paper bomb
 Into the Rhine, the Mosel and the Oder.
 But as it did not help his circulation
 He turned and fawned upon the British nation.

Great Britain, Greater Britain, Greatest Nation,
 The grandeur that was Greece has passed away,
 The glory that was Rome is now damnation,
 The French won't fight for they have had their day.
 Someone must fight to give us a sensation
 And "Rule, Britannia" all the world shall say
 Upon its knees beside the open graves
 That Britain digs for those who touch the waves.

"My Rubio," said Noel, "will you please
 Print in my paper that we now enjoy
 The *smallest* circulation of all these
 Unworthy sheets which so much time employ
 In turning blood to ink, the moon to cheese,
 The sun to gold, the earth to its alloy.
 We have the smallest circulation, but
 We keep tradition's thread from being cut."

"You'll lose your money," said the cautious Jew.
 "That's my affair," said Noel; "if I lose it
 I'll earn my living as I ought to do.
 My money's mine, but I will not abuse it
 Or hand it over to the nameless crew
 Who say they know much better how to use it,
 But let Great Britain grow into a slum
 Where men grow pale that great machines may hum."

Said Rubio: "'Tis vain to fight machines,
 For they will run while there are lives to feed them,
 And men must live although they foul the scenes
 Where men and women loved of old to breed them.
 You thank your stars that you have private means,
 The time may come when you will sorely need them.
 Don't waste them now, a hundred quid a week.
 When money talks, 'tis vain for men to speak."

In London money chattered like a grove
 Of apes, a never-ceasing, rising, falling chatter.
 Like sucking waves upon a pebbled cove
 The tide of money crushed the brain to batter.
 And Noel, though most manfully he strove,
 Found that his thoughts were growing ever flatter,
 And flat his paper fell as week by week
 He struggled on in human tones to speak.

He ruined Rubio by making him
 Acquire the art of thinking ere he wrote:
 For Rubio to write with greater vim
 Had learned to write quite mindlessly by rote
 What Newnes designed to catch the public's whim.
 His work was no more than a paper boat
 Put out to circle, dart and skim and sink—
 A waste of time, and paper, pen and ink.

So London floundered in an inky sea,
 And hearts were cold, minds starved while men still looked
 To Westminster to give their liberty
 Some meaning now that Peace was safely booked.
 But meaning was there none for eye to see
 Or heart to know. Another fish was hooked,
 And that was all. Britannia with her prong
 Digs out her meal and hears no poet's song.

And Rubio lost patience and protested :
 " If you're a poet, go away and sing.
 The blackbird sings until his mate is nested
 And doesn't care a damn for anything,
 Though life is hard for birds, whose joy is tested
 By hawks and other Harmsworths on the wing."
 Though Noel's sorrow came from seeing Truth,
 'Twas hardened by the strain of love-lorn youth.

Soon khaki worship waned. The deluge came.
 The Rand had been revived by Chinese coolies.
 Indentured labour! Slavery! The shame
 Was too, too much for Manchester, whose rule is
 To play the Yankee's not the Southern game,
 The game so clearly shown by Mr Dooley's
 Philosophy—that is, to hold and bind
 Men everywhere by economic grind.

To bring Chinese and to feed them well,
 To give them money and no great expenses,
 This was the very policy of hell
 To holy Manchester, whose moral sense is
 Too keen for my immoral pen to tell.
 For Manchester its moral sense condenses
 In keeping wages low, expenses high,
 That men must slave in freedom till they die.

Between the systems Noel could not see
 An inch of difference, save that the last
 Gave greater room for smug hypocrisy,
 The flag which Manchester nails to the mast,
 Enslaving men, pretending they are free.
 The British Liberal can be aghast
 At men enslaved who know it and don't need
 The drugs of what the rich give them to read.

There will be slaves as long as there are men
 Who buy the lives, the work, the souls of others,
 As there are many underneath Big Ben
 Who buy the laws to subjugate their brothers
 And with their wealth control the scratching pen
 That breeds the lie which Truth and Freedom smothers.
 And British slaves were made to understand
 That slavery was rampant on the Rand.

Away then with the Tories and their frank
 Defiance of the Nonconformist cry!
 Away then with the military plank
 And back to Naval Britain's Liberty!
 For Peace and Freedom Britons have to thank
 The Navy. Let the estimates be high.
 Two keels to one. The Navy does not lead
 To making slaves of men who cannot read.

It certainly makes slaves of men who can.
 But that's too deep for British minds to follow.
 The Navy's somehow clean and Christian,
 A medicine that a sea-girt race can swallow—
 The tubs thumped for the beery Englishman
 Of course are most invariably hollow
 Because he's drunk the contents. Be it noted,
 On seas of beer the British Navy's floated.

Through all the uproar Noel felt a chill
 And icy stream of creeping terror running.
 'Twas like the silence of a conscience still
 While mind and passion are employed by cunning,
 The deadly silence which no sound can kill :
 Or like a creditor who's done with dunning
 And lets the anxious debtor run a while
 Until more debts are added to his pile.

And vainly through it all my Noel waited
 To hear some stirring of the heart. None came.
 The triumph of the polls was overrated.
 The Nonconformist vote put out the shame
 Of slavery upon the Rand, but stated
 No clause of Freedom, and in accents tame
 Repeated all the cant the Tories raised
 What time their eyes on Golden Afric gazed.

Some stirring of the head he heard, cold bubbles,
 The froth in citric-acid lemonade,
 The Fabians had diagnosed the troubles
 To be put right, and Sidney Webb had laid
 A scheme by which a novel Poor Law doubles
 The swollen staff that mans the Board of Trade.
 For Sidney Webb, like Milner, thought that life
 Just needed pruning with the expert's knife.

Experts, officials, Blue-books and reports
 A regimented world told how to live,
 And how to grapple simply with all sorts
 Of problems by resorting to the sieve
 Of offices. The old world played with forts,
 The new with bureaux plays, and it can give
 As little joy to men, who left alone
 Would quickly learn to make their lives their own.

But still we let *I dare not* wait upon
I would, still busy minds must hatch a plot
 To fill the gap between the two, and on
 The great world wags though men are shot
 And starved and tortured while the union
 Of these two thoughts is baffled by the rot
 That sets in through the horrible activity
 That comes from the most mischievous proclivity

Of barren minds which, while true minds are wooing,
 Steal in and bolt and bar the House of Love
 And empty it to all the world's undoing.
 Between *I dare not* and *I would* they shove
 The mischief that has been so long a-brewing
 Since Noah ope'd the window to the dove
 And thought himself so great for having found
 A way to keep the race from being drowned.

All this was written week by week in verse
 In Noel's paper by his Rubio,
 Who cut his thoughts according to the purse
 That paid him, and could regulate the flow
 Of words with which this Jew could bless or curse
 The Christians and their most Pagan show.
 His master's thoughts he turned into a chant
 Of gloomy woe, like Mr F. his aunt.

So this was London, gloom lit up with folly.
 A moneyed caste descended on the scene
 Like locusts, and ate up the rather jolly
 Well-mannered London there had always been.
 A London fit for Joels, Jack and Solly
 Now came to life, gilt, gaudy—aye, but mean.
 No house was big enough to hold these swells
 Who overflowed into the new hotels.

Machines again, machines to catch the rich
 And drain them dry as they had drained the poor,
 And make them useless for the purpose which
 Had made their power. Like the Koh-i-noor,
 The millionaire stood for a certain pitch
 Of wealth, but wealth within a cage. A ditch
 With pimpernel and speedwell were far better.
 The spirit there is not bound by the letter.

The spirit in a hedgerow's like a flower
 And breathes its perfume to the loving air
 And knows itself the symbol of a power
 Far greater than the world between *I dare*
Not and *I would*, for in its happy hour
 It dares and wills and knows itself how rare
 It is, how precious, how far greater than the day
 Or night that sweeps the man-made world away.

The early hedgerows redden to the spring.
 Soon catkins come and tiny buds are green,
 Then violets blow and primroses all sing
 Their modest song to wake the sleeping scene.
 Birds take it up and girls their blushes bring
 To waken men to see the yet unseen.
 O! surely now in spring they will unbind
 Their eyes and no more go on being blind.

They'll surely see the glory through the eyes
 Of women and the rapture in the smile
 Of new young life, the ever-new surprise
 Upon an infant's face. They'll lose their guile
 In sheer enchantment as the vile disguise
 Falls off humanity that all this while,
 This long, long while, has laboured on
 To give poor fools their base dominion.

The fields are green with corn, the trees with may
 And chestnut red and white, the cattle browse
 And horses in the evening dart away
 So filled with winy air they must carouse
 And call the night up with a shrilling neigh,
 Birds sing, but huddled men down yonder house
 Their cares and hug them till they cannot feel
 The wonder that all other lives reveal.

'Tis wonderful to kill another man,
 'Tis wonderful to crush an enemy,
 'Tis wonderful to be a Christian
 And in another's sorrow to feel free.
 And wonderful it is with glee to scan
 The havoc wrought by wars for liberty.
 And when the enemy is soundly beaten
 'Tis great to be both drunk and overeaten.

"I've had enough," said Noel; "there is more
 In this than meets the eye. It is enough.
 Come, Rubio, we cannot hope to score
 O'er people dosed with sentiment, *quant. suff.*
 Somewhere must live the virtue I adore.
 I cannot stand this Nonconformist stuff.
 You shall not lose your job for you shall be
 My Sancho Panza and shall go with me.

"My Dulcinea's somewhere to be found.
 From Germany she wrote to me when I
 Had played the idiot. Her spirit round
 Me hovered and revealed the foolish lie
 By which the Clement-Cluny had me bound.
 I'll find her or I'll know the reason why.
 This London like a pirate ship is drunk,
 And like a pirate ship 'twill soon be sunk."

CANTO FOUR

CANTO IV

Poète, prend ton luth. O Poet, take
Thy lute and sing of Paris, where de Musset
Sang sweeter than the blackbird in the brake,
Where later on melodious Debussy
Built up a music for pure music's sake
Which put to shame great Wagner's rich and juicy
Theatrical confections, though I rather
Imagine he was Claude Debussy's father

In music. Sing, sweet poet, of the Quais,
The Luxembourg, the Louvre, the Trocadero,
For here upon the gloomiest of days,
The Jour des Morts, descended now my hero
With Rubio. A cold and noisome haze
Hung over Paris, gloomy, dark and drear. O!
For dark depression and for gloom abysmal
Than Paris no great city is more dismal.

But, Poet, sing and, please, my Muse, stand by,
For here you have a subject to your liking,
The Jour des Morts, the day that stands out high
Above the rest. The contrast is most striking.
The French are gay? The Poet cannot lie,
And when my Noel, ruddy as a Viking,
Strode through November Paris with his Jew
The city seemed to take a sable hue.

Sable is Paris, darkling as a stream
 Between its snowy banks. They do not know
 Their Paris who believe the thing they dream
 And only see what Paris cares to show.
 In Paris lives a faith that gives no gleam
 But smoulders with a dull and steady glow.
 Dull, steady, awful in its white-hot passion,
 No wonder Paris finds relief in fashion.

Hard by St Germain an *appartement*
À louer lured the travellers within.
 And Noel took it at a rent of *cent*
Vingt francs par mois. As clean as a new pin
 It was, and, as the *patronne* said, "*très elegant*."
 "By Jove!" said Noel, "here at last I'll win
 The peace of mind I've never once enjoyed
 Since my young love by England was destroyed.

"I like this Jour des Morts. It's something like
 The eating canker gnawing at my heart.
 You, Rubio, can do just as you like,
 But I am here to work and study art,
 For there I think I possibly may strike
 The trail I want." "If I can get a start,"
 Said Rubio, "I'll boom the new Entente,
 For that is what the British surely want.

"They think of Paris as a kind of sink
 Of women lost to shame and decency,
 Because the facts the British always blink
 Are dealt with here with open honesty.
 The British live unmindful of the stink
 Beneath their noses in their prudery.
 I'll write of Paris for the picture papers
 And make them see there's more in it than capers."

Now as he moved among the painters and
 The poets of the Left Bank Noel saw
 That here were men who tried to understand
 What they were doing, meant it, knew no law
 But their own passion for the selfless, grand
 Heroic squaring to the mighty awe
 Of Art wherein they found the hand of God
 To point the way that honest men have trod.

In that keen air the Philistine must die,
 As Heine knew when, shaking off the dust
 Of Göttingen, he made resolve to fly
 Across the Jordan-Rhine to break the crust
 That choked his soul until its bitter cry
 Broke in melodious song to mock the lust
 With which the Prussian threatened everything
 That took the air and lived upon the wing.

So Heine, like my Noel, winged his way
 (Like Wagner too) to Paris, where the thought
 Of all the race lives fearless of the day.
 For here the mind's great battles have been fought,
 Here men can think (and thinking is to pray),
 Here is the Grail that mindful men have sought,
 Here held aloft for men of every nation
 Who've shaken off the shackles of sensation.

But they are few, yet, congregating here,
 They do a generation's thinking for it,
 And never loose a thought until 'tis clear,
 So clear indeed that muddled minds abhor it,
 And cling to ancient formulæ for fear
 Their world should crack and nothing should restore it.
 A noble city, noble spirits built her
 To be mankind's invaluable filter.

All thoughts then lead to Paris, where they find
 New blinding thought to bring the revelation
 That there is always hope for humankind.
 So Noel found, and in his exaltation
 Looked round in quite another frame of mind
 From that which brought him so much irritation
 In London, where no mind can chew the cud
 And thought is trampled in the city's mud.

And, looking round, it was not long before
 A woman's form loomed most attractively
 Upon his vision. Though he roundly swore
 That he henceforth would pass all women by,
 The lovely Juliette Dupuy was more
 Attracted by him than she cared to be.
 She hated Englishmen and was betrothed
 To an old banker whom she warmly loathed.

There is, as Byron said, a tide in the
 Affairs of women. There's another when
 A man discovers in himself the sea
 Of his own thoughts. At such times men,
 Though vowed to a severe austerity,
 Just lose their new-found heads and then
 A woman who is swinging on her tide
 Can't help herself. They cannot but collide.

And so it was with Juliette. She said,
 In charming broken English, she could never
 Do what she quickly did when Noel read
 Her deep desire in spite of her endeavour
 To make her heart hark to her wiser head.
 Once it was done, then neither tried to sever
 The thread that bound them in their happiness
 Though Love came not their union to bless.

Still it was very pleasant. Through French eyes
 Young Noel learned to see the frugal France
 That out of ashes to the great surprise
 Of Europe rose once more to lead the Dance.
 A Dance of Death? Old Holbein's kindly eyes
 Saw Europe always to the pipe of chance
 In roundel, minuet, gavotte make play,
 While Death stood by and waited for his prey.

And while he learned to see he learned to hate
 The *rentiers*, *petits et grands*, who kept up
 The cosmopolitan and soulless State
 That into Paris recently had swept up
 The sweepings of the earth into the great
 Financial pool which had so slowly crept up
 And swamped old Paris. Juliette could tell
 A tale of wickedness surpassing well.

Her banker fiancé was a Brazilian
 Upon his mother's side, and all his friends
 (Not one of whom had less than half-a-million)
 Had come from all the corners, all the ends
 Of all the earth—Greek, Austrian, Sicilian,
 Levantine, Russian, and on such depends
 (Said Juliette) "*la destinée française,*
La gloire, l'honneur—rien ne leur apaise."

"*Rien ne leur apaise.*" They're like a flame
 That rushes over heather and parched grass
 Until the earth is but a blackened shame
 O'er which a decent soul must fear to pass.
 They know no country in their greedy game,
 But love of country moves the nameless mass
 Of men, and therefore love of country plays
 Its part to blind the guileless public gaze.

She loathed the thought of marriage with her banker ;
 But she was rich, her *dot* too great to be
 The portion of an ordinary ranker.
 So love must never be her ecstasy.
 Her ship must ever, ever ride at anchor
 And never could she bravely put to sea.
 "Dear Juliette," said Noel, "why not throw
 The whole thing over and away we'll go."

She visited him on Wednesdays in his room,
 And sometimes Sundays saw her lightly tripping
 Across the bridge to shed her growing gloom
 As down the slope of passion she went slipping.
 Love without passion is a common doom,
 But loveless passion is the sharpest whipping,
 The keenest scourge that life can hold for those
 Whose feelings can't be thrown off with their clothes.

Again a woman laid her country's soul
 Before my hero. Loveless passion burned
 His heart up till it was a lifeless coal,
 Or seemed like one, what time he hardly learned
 The desperation that can break the bowl
 Of life when sin its wages has well earned
 For blighting hopes and dragging men into
 A state in which they know not what they do.

The soul of France was in this loveless passion,
 This blind desire to scourge the flesh into
 The love it could not know, the soul to lash on
 Until it broke into a kind of dew,
 To fall upon the flesh to heal the gash on
 Which Death had licked his salt to keep it new
 And fresh for more and greater violence
 To satisfy the still unsated sense.

And this was France, this passion writhing under
 The gorgeous world of Paris that New York
 And London looked to as the greatest wonder
 Created since the advent of King Stork,
 Finance. This France would surely split asunder,
 Thought Noel, as champagne will force its cork
 Or burst its bottle if it's tapped too soon.
 This France will find another marching tune,

Another Marseillaise. For Juliette,
 In all the secret agony he guessed,
 He found a way to help her to forget.
 And sometimes almost she would have confessed
 That loveless passion had her in its net.
 But he was kind, his kindness all her rest,
 And though her soul was blistered with her shame
 To lie so much, she cried : "*Je t'aime ! Je t'aime !*"

O ouvriers du monde, unissez-vous !
 O workers of the world, unite ! These words,
 The challenge of the many to the few,
 Began to pass among the sweating herds
 Entrapped and sweated by the motley crew
 Against whom Marx so eloquently girds
 In his analysis, *Das Kapital*,
 Of thimble-rigging international.

When Juliette was weary in her soul,
 And blistered with her passion's loveless heat,
 And Noel found himself in such a hole
 As threatened e'en his judgment to unseat,
 Then he would try the socialistic rôle
 And take her to hear Jaurès for a treat.
 That orator could make them both oblivious
 Of all the torment of their thoughts lascivious.

For Noel there was more, but Juliette,
 A daughter of the *ancien régime*,
 Detested all the people. Her soul let
 No common thought be parcel of her scheme
 Of life. The mob was as a sea to fret
 The fringes of her high-born lady's dream.
 To fret in vain, since dreams they could not know
 But simply live for eating as they go.

Her dream was still the dream of Notre Dame
 And Chartres, and so she curled her lip
 At Jaurès' dream of industry and calm
 Co-operation, when the mob should strip
 The trimmings off its life and then embalm
 It in eternal peace. For her the whip
 Of passion was a greater thing than peace,
 And never would she have its blows to cease.

The martyrdom of France for her was law
 As changeless as the seasons or the sun.
 That France should have become the useful paw
 Of monkeys like her fiancé was one
 Of many signs that Heaven in its awe
 Would hold the glass until the sands were run,
 And France would suffer to sustain the glory
 Which just redeems the sordid human story.

O ouvriers du monde, unissez-vous !

Unite for what ? To work and sleep and eat ?
 To drink and talk and wive and breed and view
 A world grown duller than its dullest street ?
 To see it draped in grey and smoky hue,
 All colour gone, all form lost in the heat
 And grease and gas of working men grown fatter
 Since they're convinced that only wages matter ?

*“ Ah ! Bah ! À bas ! Ça pue ! Ça sent l’eau sâle
 Que l’on éreinte d’un éponge ! L’effort
 Ne vaut la peine ! C’est pas un esprit mâle
 Ce Jaurès ! Non ! Il est aveugle au tort
 Que fait le peuple depuis la grande rafale
 De ’89 ! Que veut il donc ? La mort
 Du peuple, et leur stupidité malsaine
 Nous ronge l’amour, nous livre à la haine.”*

As Noel's French was rather weak he could not
 Quite understand the thoughts she thus gave vent.
 He asked her to translate, but that she would not,
 For only French could cover what she meant.
 He liked his Jaurès, though he understood not
 A quarter of his message's content.
 That Jaurès might be talking through his hat
 Was nothing to the proletariat.

Now whether Jaurès through his hat was talking,
 As Juliette so sceptically said,
 A sprite of fever through the land went stalking
 And Anarchy began to rear its head.
 Though law and order constantly are baulking
 That spirit, it still rises from the dead
 And bids the living plunge to find salvation
 Through hell on earth to 'void the last damnation.

La France ! La France ! To hear a French crowd cry
 Those words is terror to the heart. So deep,
 So passionate, so tigerish, so sly
 And cruel is it that the angels weep
 To hear it, and to see the years go by
 And France still Sisyphus upon the steep,
 Still straining at the rock of human reason
 Which for the rest is always out of season.

La France! La France! Deep from the belly came
 The growling cry as Jaurès whipped the mass
 Into a sense of all the creeping shame
 That in the Third Republic came to pass
 When it was sold to play the tricky game
 Of High Finance. Jaurès held up the glass
 Of candour to La France, La France gave tongue
 To all the rage that from her soul was wrung.

The railways are a modern nation's guts.
 A strike on them should do what Corday's knife
 In Marat's did—cut through the shortest cuts
 To freedom from the strangling of the life
 Of millions when the coach of State in ruts
 Is stuck and sense is lost in wordy strife.
 The nation's instinct of self-preservation
 Provoked a strike in icy desperation.

Paris stopped still! The angry bourgeoisie
 Called for a massacre of all the vile
 Ungrateful wretches who refused to be
 Deceived by all the arts which them beguile
 (For bourgeois minds accept the knavery
 That governs them if it is worth their while).
 With each man's dossier upon their shelves
 The strikers were called up to slay themselves.

Conscription gives each man two entities,
 The shadow of a shadow he is made,
 And when he kicks against his miseries
 Then he is called to ply his soldier's trade
 To stop himself from kicking. Then he sees
 How futile is the game he bravely played.
 La France! La France! The roar soon died away
 Into the bleat for which the bourgeois pay.

"You see," said Juliette, "the silly sheep
 Are powerless. They're herded in a pen
 Locked with the pen. They cannot even keep
 Their passion up to turn them into men.
 It trickles out, and back the cowards creep,
 To be each one a docile citizen."
 So this, thought Noel, is their Liberté,
 Fraternité, Egalité! Ohé!

Eheu! Alas! This is democracy
 As it is understood in France, where still
 Men talk of Lafayette, but cannot see
 That Freedom needs a forging of the will
 Through more than physical adversity
 Before it has the power to fulfil
 Its prophecy made through the human heart
 When first it learned of beauty through its Art.

More fiercely through disgust did Juliette
 Cling to her Noel, though she clearly knew
 That she could never, never hope to get
 The love from him for which her hunger grew
 Insatiable. She floundered in the net
 With which some power had fished her from the blue
 And sunlit rippled water of her youth
 To feed on Noel's bulging store of ruth.

He maddened her because he was too kind,
 Too British for this very French affair.
 To all her subtlety his soul was blind,
 And when she wept he only kissed her hair
 And did not weep nor knock upon his mind
 As Frenchmen always do to please their fair.
 He knew she suffered, but was keen and jolly
 When she would have him sick and melancholy.

"Tu n'es pas froid, ni méchant, ni stupide,"
 She cried. *"Mais tu es lourd, moral, trop gai,*
Insouciant, et tu ne sents la vide,
La néant de l'amour. La Nuit de Mai
Pour toi est toute la vie, la lune rigide
T'enchante, Nono. Does eet always stay
 Up there so cold, monotonous and bland
 To make you that you cannot understand?"

"Oui, oui," said Noel, who could hardly say
 More in her language than plain Yes and No,
Eau chaude, and déjeuner, and poste and thé.
"Oui, oui," he said. *"Je sais, you know, I know,*
 For love like ours there is a price to pay.
 But I am not like my friend Rubio,
 Who pays in cash but loses all the joy
 Of fearless love like ours which cannot cloy."

They turned to art and set out to explore
 The regions new discovered by Cézanne,
 Who then enjoyed a posthumous furore
 And was acclaimed as leader of the van
 In modern art, whose aim was to restore
 First principles as they were known to Man
 Before his senses learned to cheat his mind
 And make him both in sight and soul stone blind.

Matisse, Van Gogh, Gauguin and Picasso—
 These were the names that ran from lip to lip,
 And these the names that artful Rubio
 Made note of as a wind to sail his ship
 When, as he hoped to do, he'd make a show
 In London Town, that needed some such whip
 To keep its mind from going fast asleep
 To dream of Dreadnoughts on the vasty deep.

For Rubio had not for nothing thrown
 His fortunes in with Noel. He believed
 His master would come surely to his own,
 And something great through him would be achieved.
 He even saw my Noel on the throne
 Of England when the country was bereaved
 Of Edward, and himself he saw as the
 Great Jew to follow B. Disraeli.

The vulgar Paris of the Boulevards,
 The Magasins, Montmartre, l'Étoile, the shows
 Got up for tourists who from near and far
 Come yearly to enjoy what they suppose
 The daily pleasures of the city are—
 These they ignored, although a tender nose
 Cannot escape the pungent sickly smell
 Which makes that Paris worse than I can tell.

Americans, said Oscar Wilde, all go
 To Paris when they die if they are good.
 And they are wise, for Paris life can show
 A clearer glimpse of Heaven than a wood
 In spring or than a mountain peak in snow
 Or than the starry smile of babyhood.
 The innocence of Paris you'll believe
 If you will look at Puvis' Genevieve.

Most saintly is she as she gazes down
 Upon her city, calm and sure. She dreams
 Of the security of its renown
 Through all the changes watered by its streams.
 Not all its evil can call forth a frown
 Upon her brow, for through its evil teems
 The light that floods the city and its name,
 And keeps its glory shining through its shame.

To die and go to Paris, there to meet
 Great Abelard and Heloise ; these two
 Keep life with passion pure and very sweet ;
 And François Villon, Ronsard and the true
 Most noble Pascal, Voltaire in the street
 That bears his name ; and Rabelais. Can you
 Desire more, you Christians who pine
 Somehow, somewhere to find a life divine ?

I cannot. There's Corneille and Molière,
 And Racine, Diderot ; their names are light
 Itself, the clear warm light that makes the air
 A wine most potent to dispel the blight
 Descended on the world from places where
 Such men have never been, the appetite
 For lies to check by forcing down the truth
 On nations bent on poisoning their youth.

They forge th'unbroken chain of thought
 Whereon are threaded all men's victories
 In other fields, and triumphs nigh unsought,
 Since they must follow in the wake of these
 The pioneers, who in themselves have fought
 The battles of humanity to please
 No man or woman but the mighty spirit
 Which all men should but few men do inherit.

Perceiving which, young Noel found he'd grown up.
 The books he read with Juliette made plain
 So many facts that he at last must own up,
 And say that he must start his life again.
 With her emetic he had simply thrown up
 Just like a child, the things that gave him pain,
 And like a child he turned to her to ease
 The gnawing pain of seeing what he sees.

The moony light of youthful love had hid
 So much in shadow that his thoughts were ghosts
 To flit from gloom to gloom while he bestrid
 With youthful joy the nigh unending hosts
 Of men and women straining at the lid
 That kept them in their hell where Satan roasts
 Their bodies in the lewdness of desire
 To make them ripe for his eternal fire.

This Roman ideology grew clearer
 To Noel when with Juliette he heard
 The music which to Paris had been dearer
 Than even beauty in the written word.
 For in it Frenchmen had come vastly nearer
 The soul of ancient France since they incurred
 In '70 the debt imposed by Bismarck,
 Who took Alsace by way of leaving his mark.

It was as though the French had said to Prussia,
 You're welcome to your mighty Emperors.
 We've tried them. They're as out of date as Russia.
 We've had enough of such conquistadors.
 Now it shall be our steadfast aim to usher
 The Modern Spirit down the corridors
 Of Time. Your war will end by making you sick.
 We'll take what you have now relinquished—music.

And as they said so it was done. In peace,
 The peace past understanding, César Franck
 Made music which seemed like another lease
 Of hope, though none would listen and none thank
 Him for it and his power to increase
 The sum of human wealth, although a bank
 Would look askance at such security,
 Producing neither interest nor fee.

In music Juliette and Noel found
 Some reconciliation of their aims,
 At last, above the earth, some common ground
 Where they could stand together 'mid the flames
 Which they saw leaping everywhere around
 Them as they found the love that tames
 All selfish love and breaks the arrogance
 With which it leads poor mortals such a dance.

Meeting that love, the love that Dante knew
 For Beatrice, their eyes met and they smiled
 A slow, sad smile to know that for them two
 That love was not, and they had been beguiled
 By charm, by passion and a longing for the new
 Among the weary people who defiled
 With their much boredom everything they touched,
 And ever at new marvels snatched and clutched.

Le sport, le football Anglais, five-o'clock,
 And aeroplanes and motor cars and racing,
 Le cinema, le boxe, et l'équivoque
 Angliche were introduced by way of gracing
 The Entente Cordiale, that mighty rock
 On which King Edward Europe's peace was basing,
 With some support from Russia, as we'll see,
 To make quite sure there'd be a victory.

But no one thought of war, except the men
 Who make their living by it—they are many.
 They think of nothing else, and make the pen
 In peace time catch the ever-vagrant penny,
 To pay for preparations for the *When*
 Which some mistake will bring. Now are there any
 Still left prepared most hotly to deny
 That war was ever dreamed by an Ally?

War's fetid wind went rustling every day
 Through Paris, and so stupefied the mind
 That none could think and none could seek a way
 By which the evil thing could be defined,
 Tracked down, dissolved and kept from mortal clay.
 Cold from the Russian steppes the bitter wind
 Blew poison westward, till the Western soul
 Grew sick and faint and lost from view its goal.

Le sport, le boxe, le cricket, le High-Life,
 These filled the world for Juliette Dupuy
 And the Brazilian whose jewelled wife
 Her people had contracted she should be.
 This bored her till her boredom like a knife
 Cleft her poor heart, which ached in misery.
*"L'amour, l'amour, je suis une amoureuse
 Et dans mon âme le ver, le ver se creuse."*

Poor Cleopatra, how she loved her asp !
 To feel at last within her jewelled hand
 The worm. At last to hold it in her grasp,
 The gnawing pain to ease which Egypt's land
 Was held within a hostile army's clasp,
 Long agony made visible, no grand
 And mighty thing, but cold, a slimy thing
 That ate into her soul and broke its wing.

When wingless life has naught to give the soul
 It aches for death, though still it hopes for healing,
 Being all hope. Now Juliette took toll
 Of what she was, her inmost self revealing
 As slowly all her life began t'unroll
 Before her eyes, no single phase concealing.
 A lover—lost, a husband—lost, a lover,
 Another yet that lover lost to cover—

That was her mother's life, the common lot,
 Though whether it is worse than being tied
 To one dull righteous man I'd rather not
 Be called upon, dear Reader, to decide.
 Nor am I sure but that the Hottentot
 Is wiser when he buys with cows a bride
 Whene'er he wants one, though I fiercely hate
 That any man should buy a woman's fate.

Must women only live and think through men,
 And to their dullness tune their sharper wits?
 They must not and they shall not if my pen
 Can only reach the level meet for its
 Responsibility and bring again
 The skill with which a proper woman fits
 Her life and love together and goes free
 By giving to her man his liberty.

A lover is conceived and must be born
 Through her he loves. The miracle of birth
 Must find its echo in the smiling morn
 Of true love in a love-lit woman's mirth.
 Without this all his life's a thing of scorn,
 Just comic in its miserable dearth.
 One moment with the loved one is enough
 To turn a man into divinest stuff.

Ethereal, aerial his spirit,
 No height too high for him to top on wings;
 No depth too deep for him then to inherit
 Where joy bursts forth in still unnumbered springs.
 No question here of morals or of merit,
 For joy is always his whose passion sings
 Its way through every snare and every danger
 Set out to catch the fearless, reckless ranger.

That was the feeling which in Noel flickered
 As he reacted from his Juliette.
 And when they quarrelled and she snarled and bickered
 He smiled and said there was one way to get
 Her freedom from her Banker, who, well-liquored,
 Was kind to her as to a parlour pet,
 But in more sober moments made her see
 Her beauty was his private property.

That way was simple. Noel said he'd wed.
 "Non, non!" said she. "Oui, oui!" said he. "*Je vais*
Me marier chez toi." They were in bed,
 For it was on a stolen Saturday.
 They argued hotly, but she lived in dread
 Of what the Holy Mother Church would say,
 For though a most intelligent young woman
 Her thoughts upon this subject were sub-human.

She could *not* think of marriage and the sexes,
 Her thought had been laid down for her long since
Au couvent, and the subject which perplexes
 So much of life could never make her wince
 From her unreason, for the Church indexes
 For adolescence where it should convince
 With argument and scientific fact
 Administered, of course, with taste and tact.

He talked so easily of breaking free,
 He who had been in Africa the child
 Of sun and air. To him his liberty
 Was like his breathing, sweet and undefiled
 By the contamination he could see
 Corrupting Europe. With her passion wild
 It seemed to him that Juliette could throw
 Discretion to the winds and jilt her beau,

But she was bound. Her mind could not consent
 To what she did and yet she did it. That
 Will always be the way of women bent
 On marrying a soulless plutocrat
 Without incurring hopeless banishment
 From what her simpler sisters would be at.
 She would not marry Noel, yet she would not
 Desist from talking stuff he understood not.

So there was war, a desperate long duel
 In which his British kindness was worsted,
 For she could be and he could not be cruel,
 And for his cruelty she hotly thirsted,
 As women do when they have lost the jewel
 Of wedded love and seen their lives so bursted
 That there's no hope of winning back again
 The joy that is triumphant over pain.

Noel grew thin, emaciated, grey,
 And Rubio, his courage in his hand,
 Protested that his master should not pay
 So dearly for his sojourn in this land
 Where women far too often have their way
 And eat up those who do not understand
 The technique of the passionate affairs
 Which take the place of love that lasts and wears.

The Jew in Rubio detested her,
 The plutocratic Catholic who dragged
 His master through this intrigue sinister
 In which his joyous spirit paled and flagged,
 And from the joyful eager messenger
 Of Love transformed him to a soul that sagged
 Just like a currant cake ill cooked and moist.
 With her own petard was she shortly hoist.

The faithful Jew informed her fiancé
 Of her too frequent tender assignations,
 And the Brazilian upon a day
 Rudely disturbed their gloomy meditations
 Upon the fire that burns in mortal clay.
 He did not waste much time on explanations,
 But challenged there and then the Englishman
 Who dared insult a French Brazilian.

To cleanse the lady's honour these two fought
 Upon a day of springtime loveliness
 In Fontainebleau, where Noel oft had sought
 In lonely walks the spirit that can bless
 The aching heart which has too fiercely fought
 To keep its wonder in the throng and press.
 "The heart's a wonder," cried the poet Synge
 When with his satire he had had his fling.

In Fontainebleau the ghosts of kings and queens,
 Great courtiers and courtesans are known
 To keep their state beneath the budding green
 When violets and celandine are blown.
 They live and move in the enchanted sheen
 That springtime round the woods has thrown.
 They move like figures in a tapestry,
 So softly, silently and gracefully.

They move and yet are still and seem to wait
 For all their world to come to join their revelry,
 For grosser mortals with their clumsy gait
 To wake their royal stillness with their devilry,
 As once they did in time when Royal State
 Maintained its splendour with high chivalry.
 But grosser mortals pass and do not know
 The living greatness in the springtime glow.

The green buds burst and all things exquisite
 That ever lived in immortality
 Of joy join in the seasons as they flit
 And bear things mortal off upon the sigh
 Of autumn winds rejoicing to be quit
 Of men who will not live before they die.
 In Fontainebleau's enchantment Noel saw
 Old Europe pass in mediæval awe.

The Roi Soleil and Richelieu and Madame
 With lords and ladies flitted through the shimmer,
 And old Saint-Simon noted down the Adam
 Unchastened working in the golden glimmer
 About these personages. Noel bade 'em
 Stop, speak, but as the greenish light grew dimmer
 They passed away from stillness into magic,
 Beyond the region where this life is tragic.

But others came, as Marie Antoinette
 And Louis XVI., with shepherds, silken-clad,
 Who piped and danced a rural minuet
 And made to be as peasants grossly glad,
 Sweet mummary to help them to forget
 The days of riot when they had run mad
 And drunk too deeply of the heady wine,
 The blood of France that nourishes the vine.

Transfigured, Noel stood in Fontainebleau.
 The nightmare of his Paris days was swept
 In this enchanted moment's morning glow
 Into oblivion, and from his soul there crept,
 Refreshed, renewed, the power again to know
 The truth that for her chosen Life has kept.
 These perfect moments are the flower of all.
 Who misses them is damnèd in his fall.

He turned to Rubio and in amazement
 "Did you not see?" he cried. "Did you not see?
 The marching of those figures through the haze meant
 That nothing dies if once its soul is free."
 "You're ill," said Rubio, to whom his phrase meant
 Exactly nothing. "You are ill, and we
 Are in a sorry plight, for here's the other
 And with him is Miss Juliette's young brother."

They came with swords and bandages and brandy,
 A doctor, and their breakfast in a basket.
 Their faces looked as though with sugar-candy
 Their teeth were stuck. Each face was like a mask. It
 Was an occasion ripe for Toby Shandy
 And honest Trim, good Trim who held the casket
 Of so much English humour in his head—
 But English humour like so much is dead.

M. Dupuy and M. Garcia
 De Garros de Fuego-Clément-If
 Stood cold and still some twenty yards away
 With Latin scowls upon the British thief,
 What time the seconds argued the affray
 Which now for Noel was beyond belief.
 Why should he fight this man with many names?
 It seemed to him the silliest of games.

Most foolish was it in the prime of morn,
 When dewdrops hung upon the spider's thread,
 When through the veil a gaping hole was torn
 To show the quickness of the joyous dead
 Who beckon on the legions yet unborn
 To greater life than that from which thy fled:
 Most foolish in the green of Fountainebleau
 To think of death or making blood to flow.

If M. Garcia etcetera

Still loved his Julie, might he not forgive?
That would be harder and more worthy a
Brazilian who might expect to live
With her in peace by such a gentle way
Of passing past offences through the sieve
Of Time's oblivion, but jealousy
Still keeps alive the forms of chivalry.

And gazing on the bold Brazilian
(For so he was, and hairy like an ape)
Our hero saw the cosmopolitan
As Hamlet saw the dread fantastic shape,
His father's ghost, revealing all the plan
To make graves yawn and Europe's churchyards gape.
A thing unclean, from whom had come the rust
To bring the soul of Juliette to the dust.

He saw his adversary as the worm
That gnawed at Fancy, Truth, Religion,
To make the captive souls of women squirm
And seek in vain their heart's companion.
Long since in London Noel had been firm
That he'd not go where so much good had gone.
And here in Fontainebleau's green haze
He'd seen the glory of old France ablaze.

"You have a cold," said Rubio. "You must not
Take off your coat." "No, no, I never was
So well. . . . With sword shall be discussed not
The question whether stainlessly shall pass
A foolish woman taught at last to lust not,
But which of us shall lie dead on the grass."
He spoke in English, but Dupuy had heard
And told his friend the risk he had incurred.

"Cet Angliche là est furieux et fou. . . .

"J'espère qu'il ne se sait pas en escrime. . . ."

The doctor thought of what he ought to do
If one were killed. But Noel in a dream
Imagined this another Waterloo
To make this modern tyrant kick the beam,
A tyrant who with hordes of wretched clerks
Upon the conquest of the world embarks.

And Rubio was terrified and wept
And rushed across to where the seconds stood.
He saw how M. Garros-If had swept
His enemy with hatred from the wood
With one swift glance and towards him slowly crept,
Correct in every fencer's attitude.
But Noel rushed, sprang, lunged and wildly thrust
His sword in till it seemed as though it must

Impale the great apostle of Finance.
But he was pricked. He fell and groaned a groan
That must have wakened half the cocks in France
And all the dogs, for they set up a moan
That made the leaves upon the trees all dance,
And turned my Noel's beating heart to stone.
When cruel Nature triumphs over feeling
The heart comes near its inmost truth revealing.

The spell was broken. Trees were only trees,
And dewdrops broke and spider threads were seen
No more. The cold light of the sun 'gan freeze.
The very violets and celandine,
Whose modesty come shyly up to please,
Were hidden now in the excessive green.
At last young Noel found his voice and said :
"Is he alive?" The doctor bowed his head.

"O God!" cried Noel. "How came this to pass?
 What demon lived in me to take sincerely
 This little mimic conflict on the grass?
 I seemed to see so much so very clearly,
 Although I cannot tell you what it was.
 If he is dead, then I have paid too dearly
 For all I've learned in suffering and anguish
 Of women who in loveless passion languish.

"A man may be an evil thing and yet
 He is a man, too great a thing for men
 To judge." They took poor M. If and set
 Him on his feet to totter through the glen
 Towards the little low estaminet
 Where they had left their taxi. Noel then
 Was slightly reassured, and donned his coat—
 The kindest man who ever cut a throat.

His conscience throbbed and, being conscientious—
 Too conscientious—off he went to call
 Upon his Juliette, from whose contentious
 And very Gallic nature issued all
 This pother, for had she been more abstentious
 She never would have seen her Garros fall
 A victim to the outworn code of honour
 Whose consequences now descended on her.

Noel explained in honest British fashion
 What he had done and what proposed to do.
 He told her of the strange exalted passion
 Which drove him on until he crashed right through
 Convention's ice to let his fury dash on
 To kill the false and liberate the true.
 But to his horror Juliette grew pale
 And shuddered as he told his breathless tale.

She called him "*Assassin!*" as ladies cry
 In dramas at the Porte St-Martin, and
 She hugged her breast and clutched her hair, and dry
 And glassy were her eyes, what time her stand
 She took upon approved morality.
 She curled her lip and bit her jewelled hand
 And cried in scorn: "The English are all mad,
 But you are worse. You're both insane and bad."

This was no time for heated argument,
 No time for dialectical debate,
 And Noel felt he had been too long pent
 In passion which could ill conceal its hate.
 If this is what upon the Continent
 They make of love, he thought, then surely Fate
 Must have some fearful vengeance up its sleeve,
 For man you can but Fate you can't deceive.

Still more had Juliette Dupuy to say to him.
 Ice-cold, she called him, and perfidious
Perfide Albion! She'd given way to him
 Although he was *au fond* ridiculous,
 Like all the English. Then she said good-day to him,
 As though there'd never been the slightest fuss.
 "Leave me," she said, "to mourn my noble dead!"
 Aghast at such hypocrisy, he fled.

What was it made these women fly into
 His life like moths into a candle or
 Like bats into a lighted window? Who
 Can tell what women ever struggle for
 Or why they wish their lovers to be true
 When they are not themselves? The Toison d'or
 Led Argonauts upon a voyage hapless,
 And women in their voyages are mapless.

Or so it seemed to Noel, who was wrecked
 In Paris as in London he had been,
 Because he'd let its villainy infect
 The youthful joy he'd won at seventeen,
 When Love had made him one of the elect
 To dominate the transitory scene
 Where most of us are merely pawns or cogs
 In the machine which human folly clogs.

He sought out Rubio and told him that
 He'd broken with the lady. "*Gott sei Dank*,"
 Said Rubio. "'Twas I who put the fat
 Into the fire. This woman's conduct stank
 Of modern Paris, and I acted pat
 Just in the nick of time before you sank,
 Although perhaps you are a Salamander
 In Europe's heat, you joyous Afrikander."

Then Rubio laid bare that he had news
 Of Katje through a friend of his who taught
 At the Conservatoire, and several clues
 He had to help in finding whom they sought,
 The love which is as healing as the dews
 Of English April when the spring has taught
 New life, new joys to break the winter weather
 And bind in song all budding songs together.

In Paris? No. She had been there a while,
 And all adored her for the liquid grace
 In all her gestures, in her childish smile
 That touched with gold the wisdom in her face.
 And Noel groaned and felt he had been vile
 To let his limbs be tethered to the pace
 Of slavish women, dark and cold of heart,
 Who lived upon the fever of the mart.

He had been young and over-chivalrous,
 A bond-slave to the wreckage of his life,
 And dazed by Europe with its ominous
 Oppressive shadow looming up with strife.
 He'd been a fool to let the women fuss
 About him when at heart he had a wife.
 And now in Paris he had killed a man,
 If so you call a French Brazilian.

They packed. They sold his lease and furniture
 And caught the night express to Basle, where runs
 The River Rhine, whose nymphs were glad, I'm sure,
 To see my Noel come among the Huns.
 They sang their glee to see so young and pure
 A spirit come to soar above the guns
 With which the Germans learned to do their thinking
 From Bismarck, who could slaughter without blinking.

Urvater Rhein! You growled a welcome too
 As Noel crossed the frontier and said
 Farewell to France and *Herzensgruss* to you
 In whom there live so many noble dead.
Urvater Rhein, if men would only woo
 Your spirit more you would not run so red
 As you have done these many generations
 Since on your banks were lined the foolish nations.

Low lay the clouds upon the mountain ranges
 As Noel and his Jew in their hotel
 Surveyed the lovely scene that never changes
 While change in men evolves a changing Hell.
 When Heaven is so near what seems so strange is
 That men can't make the effort to be well
 And sane and comradely and kind enough
 To take the smooth and tolerate the rough.

And here we leave our Quixote in reaction
 On neutral ground against the tortured France
 In which he'd found so little satisfaction
 In probing underneath her elegance.
 We let him breathe at ease before the action
 Of this our epic makes him once more dance
 Before the rising waves of Europe's storm
 Destroys its life and shatters its old form.

We leave him gazing at the mountain peaks
 And musing with the Rhine, who shares his deep
 And ancient wisdom with the soul that speaks
 Its knowledge out and not a thought will keep
 Sealed up in silence, but its inmost seeks
 And brings it forth, not fearing for to weep
 Or laugh in such assuring company
 As Father Rhine with wisdom running free.

Wise are the mountains, wise the tender snows
 That veil their rising summits from the sun.
 And wise the dandelion and the rose,
 The gentian blue as eyes lit up with fun
 In babyhood. And wise the stream that flows
 From all this wisdom till its tale is done
 And lost in the unfathomed wisdom of the ocean
 So deep and still beneath its wind-blown motion.

Wise are all these! How foolish then are men
 With so much show maintaining all their folly!
 A poet should write wisdom with his pen.
 But where to find it? There's the melancholy
 Inexorable fact, that thwarts me when
 I'd like to be just musical and jolly.
 The wisdom of a poet cannot thrive
 When folly in his fellows is alive.

Still, Muse, my dear, we'll take our promised flight
 Above the mountains, higher than the stars,
 For we could fly when Mr Wilbur Wright
 Was floundering and getting full of scars.
 We'll fly beyond the source of day and night,
 And leave my fellows to the bolts and bars
 Which they so love that they will fight and slay
 Rather than walk out freely in the day.

Men won't be free, because they are afraid
 Of Freedom's high responsibility,
 And of the fateful wages which are paid
 For sin well sinned and joy enjoyed with glee.
 But you and I, my 'Muse, were never made
 To be imprisoned in such misery.
 The perfume of a violet can give
 Our souls the joy on which they fiercely live.

High is our flight in ecstasy to wake
 Delight to be consumed by the waves
 Of music raging from the gods to break
 The thickened crust upon a world of slaves
 Who will not hear the bird upon the brake
 Much less the windy music from the caves
 Of Time, where songs are born but lose their way
 Among the stars that smile on mortal clay.

They smile because they see this wretched Earth
 As just a little twinkler like themselves.
 If they could see the miserable dearth
 Of joy with which poor Adam digs and delves
 And Eve dries up his failing source of mirth,
 What time the fruit of all his work she shelves,
 They'd look away and never shine again
 And nothing do to ease our mortal pain.

God rest you, Noel, here in Switzerland.
 Wait in the land of waiters till I feel
 That I am strong enough to try my hand
 Upon the folk who make the iron heel
 Just bearable (*Hoch! Hoch! Dem Vaterland*)
 With beer and sausage and kultur, the meal
 Which every German gorges every day
 In gratitude to Berlin on the Spree.

Consider Switzerland, and Thomas Cook
 (A greater than the Captain), Henry Lunn,
 And William Tell—three names upon the Book
 Of Fame engraved until the tale is done.
 All helped to make this little sheltered nook
 A place to which the persecuted run.
 And here by the pellucid Lake Geneva
 Young Noel met with exiles from the Neva.

Here I must pause to doff my hat and take
 My grateful heart out from my panting breast
 That can no longer hold it, while I make
 My tribute to Voltaire, whose exile blest
 The rather chromolithographic lake,
 Where Rousseau dreamed and was the Muses' guest.
 What can I say? What need I say indeed?
 The man was sixty when he wrote *Candide*.

I'll ask the old man's ghost if he would mind
 My introducing to his *Ingénu*
 My Noel, for they're heroes of one kind,
 Who unconcerned do what they want to do
 And do not understand the rules that bind
 Such timid halting folk as me and you.
 The old man said: "All right, but go ahead
 And let me be to try to save the dead

"From the illusion which so utterly destroyed
 Their life on earth, where death was all their truth
 And nothing else by beauty was enjoyed,
 And old age tried to force its death on youth.
 When I still walked in flesh I was employed
 In crying havoc on such lack of youth."
 The Ingénu and Noel were delighted
 To meet each other in this place benighted.

For Rubio had met a Russian friend,
 A Jew from Spital Square who'd killed his man
 Good-humouredly in Moscow to defend
 The Revolution which he'd hoped would pan
 Out like the French, a broken world to mend.
 He'd blown to dust a great Caucasian
 Who knew too much of what Young Russians harp on,
 And also had corrupted Father Gapon.

"My master's killed a rich financier
 In Paris!" Rubio declared with glee.
 "I see th'affair has made a little stir
 And famous now is Juliette Dupuy.
 But no one even knows the name of her
 Inamorata. All because of me.
 I blew the gaff because I had to bust
 The woman who abused my master's trust."

"Da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da, da!"
 Exclaimed the Russian. "That was very good.
 The French finance the Tsar, whose opera
 Is all he has to show for Russian blood
 Poured out to pay his interest. Ah! ha!
 A French capitalist! Destroy the brood
 Who carry on as though the Corsican
 Were not *démodé* by the Marxian

"Apostolate, of whom I and my friends,
 Who've also killed their man, are humble members,
 All pledged to see that to its farthest ends
 Europe shall burn and crumble into embers.
 It's bound to come; how soon of course depends
 On men like us, whose bitterest Decembers
 Yet hold the germ of spring to blossom forth
 As soon it will up in the blood-soaked north.

"The workers of the world have naught to lose
 Except their chains. Class-consciousness will grow
 Until at last the workers will refuse
 To labour on, while idle spendthrifts throw
 Their work away in striving to amuse
 Themselves. . . ." "Da, da. Yes, yes," said Rubio,
 Who knew all that and so refused to let
 His friend explain the Marxiste alphabet.

The lamentable death of M. If
 Was a credential here, and Noel found
 Among these people kindness past belief,
 Though tempered somewhat with their not quite sound
 Mentality, which made them see a thief
 In every man who could produce a pound
 At will, for they, poor things, had not a bean
 With which to win the vision they had seen.

Long-haired the men, short-haired the women, who
 Talked less but felt the more, and ghostly glared
 Upon the world whose crimes they would review
 At any length to anyone who cared.
 In Switzerland they'd nothing else to do.
 So long they'd been in exile, all prepared
 For Revolution which they knew would come
 To clear the lake of Europe of its scum.

A Dostoieffsky novel is not more
 Loquacious than a Russian who will talk,
 As other men get drunk, to help restore
 Their courage to surmount the ills that baulk
 Their generous desires. And here a score
 Of Russians talked until they could not walk.
 In cafés nightly talked and talked until
 Some kindly person came to pay the bill.

When Noel paid their bill they talked again
 For five days at a stretch to such a hearer,
 An Afrikander innocent and plain
 Of thought, to whom their tale was a Chimera,
 A mystic myth that hurt his puzzled brain
 So that he sometimes asked them to be clearer.
 And then they talked, expecting him to pay
 For what they ate, what time they had their say.

He paid, and on they rushed, their eyes imploring
 Him with his youthful joy to take the lead,
 And wake poor Europe from its age-long snoring,
 Drugged with a most misapprehended creed.
 "We Russians find your Europe very boring,
 We cannot find in it the thing we need.
 We want to be good Europeans, but
 The door on Goethe's Europe has been shut.

"What can we do we Russians who are not
 A nation but a congerie of races?
 We want a culture, but it must be HOT,
 And we don't want the Yellow man's embraces.
Au contraire, we would let ourselves be shot
 Rather than woo this present Europe's graces.
 Quite definitely we will not be Prussian,
 But there is nothing in us purely Russian.

“ We sit in cafés till we’re paralysed.
 There’s nothing we can do except in print,
 And that in Russia’s censored and revised
 Until it hardly gives a single hint
 Of what we really mean. And we have sized
 The situation up so often that no glint
 Of practical good sense appears in what
 We say and say again in this dull spot.”

And Noel felt their gloom begin to creep
 Into his bones, until he could not stir
 Or feel or act, and everything in sleep
 Was sunk except his brain, and that would whirl
 Like a machine with no man there to keep
 It clean, or to prevent the fluffy fur
 Of dust and rust that gathered in upon it,
 And choked the thought the Russians had laid on it.

Most horrible ! His mortal eye could see
 Mont Blanc and nothing else, what time the eye
 Of his immortal soul, which used to be
 So keen that it was never bounded by
 Things human, but could see eternity
 Through all the farce played out in misery
 Which men call Life, saw nothing but the steppes
 Of Russian talk from Marxiste demireps.

They’d been in prison. Prison was their mind,
 As Companies and Trusts are all the thought
 Of Western Europe. Prison still could bind
 Their souls as surely as if they had bought
 Machines to do the work they owed mankind.
 In Prison they had found the thing they sought,
 What all men seek in modern life, a trick
 With which to snuff their candle’s too-long wick.

A prison's a machine with which to give
 Unsocial men some social sense, and make
 Them realise they have no right to live
 Except for some community's dear sake.
 In modern life no man's a fugitive.
 There's no escape, and every man must take
 The plunge and let machinery defame
 His brains until his manhood's but a name.

Successful men wreak havoc with their deeds,
 With words the unsuccessful drench their lives.
 Mankind is one huge belly whose gross needs
 Must be supplied, though nothing lovely thrives,
 And everything that lives for beauty bleeds,
 And Freedom pines in manacles and gyves.
 Mankind is one huge belly that devours
 Love, lovers and their delicatest flowers.

Hotels and prisons ! What a world ! Escape ?
 "I must escape," thought Noel, and he fled
 To ease his mind of the fantastic shape
 Assumed by Man since human souls were dead,
 While animate machines committed rape
 Upon Society so grievously misled.
 Hotels and prisons ! All to fill these two
 Were poor and rich, the many and the few.

Up to the mountains Noel fled alone.
 Alone ! To be alone, upon the mountains bare,
 To touch the cold and unrelenting stone,
 The solid stone, to breathe the eager air.
 Here on the mountains life seemed all his own,
 A step upon the never-ending stair
 That leads to God, upon whose knees are laid
 The souls of these whose love was not afraid.

How beautiful upon the mountains are
 The feet of them that bring glad tidings! None
 Found Noel on Mont Blanc though near and far
 He gazed in childish expectation.
 None save himself the virgin snow did mar,
 And he was forced to see that One is One
 And all alone and ever more shall be so.
 We all must reap in time the tares that we sow.

And Noel reaped his now as he perceived
 No feet upon the mountains which became
 A challenge to himself who vainly grieved
 To see so little light come from the flame
 Of passion's joy in which he had believed.
 He reaped his tares in agony and shame,
 Then piled them up and burned them with the fire
 Of purer joy and still untouched desire.

How comforting the silence and the snow
 Away from men who act and live and talk,
 But never think that always what they know
 And what they do are different as chalk
 From cheese! How comforting to throw
 All social thought aside and freely walk
 Full of the healing air with sunlight thrown
 From snow and sky! How good to be alone!

Though men build cities and create a world,
 Still to the earth Man's love must ever turn,
 Else in a prison is his spirit curled:
 His love and all it makes its own must burn,
 Must be destroyed and into chaos whirled.
 Only from Earth can human passion learn
 Creation and the power to increase
 The joys wherewith the soul can live at peace.

Here in the mountains moulded by the sun
 New earth is made and carried by the rivers
 Which to the sea from snowy caverns run.
 So too the soul that out of selfhood shivers
 Pours down its joy in being fiercely One
 And all alone to animate the livers
 In cities, cramped by law, who need this Earth
 Before they can bring any joy to birth.

But Noel was too young for long reflection ;
 He swiftly knew the thing he wished and plunged
 And never wasted time in mere dejection.
 Past sorrows from his soul were quickly sponged,
 And naught was left for intimate dissection.
 So down he flew and into life he lunged,
 Forgetful of the hurts that it had yielded
 Him when his sword of youth he'd wielded.

He held it now more firmly, and it shone
 And gleamed like Arthur's sword Excalibur.
 "Come, Rubio!" he said, "let us begone.
 Let's go where life's alive and there's a stir
 Of hope in men of more than putting on
 A mental attitude, as they prefer,
 To face the Nothing which contains the whole
 Of human life—except the human soul."

"The human soul," said Rubio, "has left
 The human race. Its job is gone. Its work
 Is now done by machinery which deft
 And nimble artisans attend, who shirk
 As much as possible, since they're bereft
 Of the old pride which freed them from the irk
 Of ceaseless toil. They toil unceasingly
 To help machines to breed machinery.

And Noel laughed. Not while the mountains stand,
 Not while the snows in rivers reach the sea,
 Not while the roses blossom in the land,
 Not while the birds maintain their minstrelsy,
 Not while the lover holds his loved one's hand,
 Not while true lovers take in ecstasy
 Their more than Freedom, can the soul of Man
 Be driven out by any social plan.

For men are singers sweeter far than all
 The melody of field and wood and brake.
 The soul of Man in song will ever call,
 And men will answer though they pine and ache
 And go so blindly, stumble on and fall
 Into a sleep so fast that none can wake
 Their senses to the slow and sly disaster
 That creeps upon them, all their hopes to master.

Men sing as children smile because they know
 The light that in them lives and radiance
 Outpours for everything that seems to show
 Its light to them in happy, happy chance.
 Men sing and laugh, aye, even when they go
 Beneath the shadow of Death's countenance.
 They sing because it is not worth the trouble
 To take quite seriously this life's bubble.

CANTO FIVE

CANTO V

NACH seiner Weltanschauung kam mein Held
Wohl menschenfreundlich, jung und hoffnungsvoll
Mit Rubio nach Baden wo das Geld
Klingt musikal wie Heine's Atta Troll.
Ein Sommernachtstraum in des Dichters Welt
Wo Sehnsuchtsflügeln rauschen—Noel soll
Auf diesen Flügeln zierlich sich erheben
Dem Menschen seine Freiheit noch zu geben.

On second thoughts, dear Muse, you shall translate
These Hunnish lines into the English tongue
Explaining to the English that the hate
They saw in Germany was music wrung
In anguish from the German soul which Fate
Condemns to flights of longing, songs unsung,
Impossible romance idealising
Both good and bad with innocence surprising.

“ I'm happy here,” said Noel, as in Baden
He breathed romance upon the piney air ;
“ This operatic country is a garden
In which there's room for life and some to spare.”
Said Rubio, “ O ! rot ! I beg your pardon,
The world is round and German heads are square ;
Don't be misled by all their High Romance
But scan the German gargoyle countenance.”

Then Rubio to Berlin on the Spree
 Departed there to visit his relations.
 He left my Noel happy as the day
 At having shaken off his irritations
 Upon Mont Blanc, that he could go his way
 And tend the seed of thought in his sensations ;
 Pine trees, good wine, old books and German songs
 Could drown his young remorse for human wrongs.

Aus Deutschland kommt vielleicht noch lange nichts
 —No, no, my Muse, good English must we write
 Das Deutschtum ist die Seele des Gedichts
 —If this goes on, dear Muse. I'll say good-night
 Or write the Doric of my own Auld Lichts.
 That's settled it, the Muse and I agree
 To write in English of Old Germany.

A Russian Prince, a Vicomtesse of France,
 A Prima Donna from New York, a Greek-
 Italian, a Captain of Finance,
 With these my Noel spent a hectic week
 Although he'd sized them up and with a glance
 Had seen that they could only speak
 The brainless jargon of the moneyed few
 Who from their millions dully take their cue.

With them he might as well have been in Spain
 Or France or anywhere with big hotels
 And bigger garages where Time is slain
 And towns are gilded into gambling hells
 Where bored folk come to ease their boredom's pain.
 One week my Noel spent among the swells
 And then withdrew, though once again pursued
 By women roused by contact with the prude.

For prudish Noel was. There's no concealing
 That fact, which was his weakness and his danger.
 Too English was he to allow his feeling
 To meet the eagerness of any stranger.
 His soul in knightliness was ever kneeling
 To Christ, the infant shining in the manger.
 The Christ upon the cross he could not see
 For Life to him was in its infancy.

Now probably that is the truth and so
 All premature are efforts at solution ;
 There must be many ages yet to go
 Of Time's inveterate circumlocution
 Before humanity can hope to know
 The thing the many gulp and very few shun.
 That is, the strange and disconcerting mystery
 Which lies athwart the whole of human history.

The Gräfin Clara Fuld von Heringpfeiffer
 Was one who gulped, as German women do,
 Who eat and drink with zeal (in German *Eifer*),
 Regarding life as a delicious stew.
 To meet a fresh young English simple-lifer
 Like Noel, was a thing too keenly new
 For such a German woman's appetite,
 Accustomed to consume good things at sight.

Although quite young, she was already big,
 Pale, honey-coloured, eyes and hair and lashes,
 Resembling somewhat a distinguished pig
 Dressed up in Paris frocks and girlish sashes.
 She'd read her Nietzsche and a full-blown prig
 She was, the kind of female prig who smashes
 Her way through all her parents' old conventions
 Without first finding out her own intentions.

She had been spoiled and ruthlessly pursued,
 With all the rigid ardour of the Hun,
 This Englishman who hardly understood
 What thing it was that kept him on the run.
 What time he hoped that Life would not intrude
 Upon his peace and his desire for fun.
 He tried to dodge her but in vain; she said
 She'd be Salome asking for his head.

She had a father, an old general,
 Commander of a garrison, who could not
 Gainsay his daughter anything at all
 And let her always do the thing she should not,
 So skilful was she to arouse his gall
 And make him do the thing he vowed he would not,
 And he was made to take the Englishman
 Beneath his wing to suit his daughter's plan.

She wished to be betrothed. She wished to go
 To London where so many Germans went
 For High Life and the gilded puppet show
 That has been England's condign punishment.
 She wished to know those who are in the know,
 To be an English lady on the scent
 Of money and the might that money brings
 In modern life, the twilight of the kings.

She wished to be a lady. That's the root
 Of half the trouble in the universe.
 As she was rich, she wished to buy the fruit
 Of leisured generations, for the purse
 She held omnipotent. She held, to boot,
 That Mr Noel Higgins might do worse
 Than take to wife a military heiress,
 In her own right a German millionairess.

She had blue blood and coal. No higher can
 Be looked for in our modern Golden Age.
 And she had vowed to wed an Englishman
 Because she wished a somewhat wider stage
 Than in the Fatherland (whose rataplan
 Aroused in her a fierce despairing rage)
 Could be produced in time to suit the schemes
 That filled her young but most Teutonic dreams.

Blue blood and coal. She had then a position
 That Cleopatra might have envied, but no sense
 Of how to use it save to guarantee perdition,
 Like Calvin, to all those outside the fence
 Made by herself. She dreamed of a transition
 To England where the poor look after pence
 While pounds are wasted by the parasites
 Who gorge the world to sate their appetites.

She loved in Noel what he blindly hated,
 The England he so vainly had denounced.
 She loved it so that soon, infatuated,
 She planned and schemed to have him quickly bounced
 Into betrothal, knowing, if she waited
 That, as she dreaded, she would be well trounced.
 He was so slow that oft she longed to slap him,
 But clever though she was she could not trap him.

They had romantic drives o'er pine-clad hills
 And up into the Freiburg snows: the Rhine
 They visited, and Heidelberg where swills
 The student beer with *dreimal Hoch* for *Wein*
Weib und Gesang, the trinity that spills
 So frequently the Trinity Divine.
 The Gräfin in good English could explain
 For all things German her complete disdain.

Nothing more German than herself could be,
 Her voice reverberated in her throat;
 She swung her military shoulders free
 With every muscle taut, and she would gloat
 And lap up even beauty greedily.
 From authors French and English she could quote,
 Returning then to Nietzsche, not the least
 Suspecting that herself was his blonde beast.

Noel was horrified and fascinated
 And could not wrench himself away,
 Voracity like hers seemed so belated
 In modern times when each dog has his day.
 She made him laugh when on his nerves she grated,
 And when he laughed she thought that he was gay
 And English, and she tried herself to be
 As blithe to join him in hilarity.

He chaffed her as an Englishman can chaff
 In friendliness a lady who's not wanted;
 It was a pleasure new to her to quaff
 Such kindness, and as she quaffed she planted
 Upon her hopes her passion's epitaph,
 For that was all of Passion Noel granted.
 As he could laugh he felt, whatever storm
 She might arouse, he'd keep his own good form.

But she was deeper than he thought and kept
 Herself in check and made her father ask him
 To stay with them where Germany still slept
 In Baiern at their castle. To unmask him
 Was her design what time her passion crept
 Towards the crisis which should sorely task him.
 She'd guessed at last that he had been through much,
 And when a woman guesses that she'll touch.

But Noel felt so happy and secure
 In this strange country smiling in romance,
 Where Rubio had said they would be sure
 To end their quest and find the countenance
 Of Love, its light outpouring for the pure,
 And blinding evil so that it must dance
 The dance of Death in frenzy Gadarene
 And no more stain the merry human scene.

Es ist Verboten. So the motto reads
 With which all Germany is widely plastered.
 There's hardly one of all our human needs
 But is *Verboten*, and the word has mastered
 The German mind until the very seeds
 Of thought have perished and the mind's mean bastard
 Docility, usurping with the word,
Verboten, makes bold virtue look absurd.

Square heads and large round spectacles, New Art,
 Freak houses with no windows, walls embossed
 With carved and painted stones placed to impart
 The sense of *Neuheit* when true beauty's lost.
 The streets of German towns made Noel start
 With pain to think what so much newness cost,
 The stamping out of every great tradition,
 To spare the nerves that ached in the transition.

Houses were built in cubes and squares and cones,
 Gardens designed to look like anything
 On earth but gardens, and the very stones
 Were made to look like bread and cheese to bring
Neuheit to such a pitch that German bones
 Should ache with it and go aquivering
 And never move except upon the word
Verboten, which makes all else go unheard.

The holy word stood then between the race
 And all humanity, both past and future, and
 Installed its *Neuheit* as the very face
 Of God made manifest on every hand
 In Germany and in no other place
 Since other races could not understand
 And could not hope to, what God had reserved
 For German might by *Neuheit* backed and nerved.

And Noel rather loved it, loved the childish
 And quite unconscious pride of adolescence,
 For he himself had been a little wildish
 In letting off his youthful effervescence.
 But that a nation should concoct this vile dish
 Of newness, this macédoine, excrescence
 On excrescence piled until complete insanity
 Is needed to support such fearful vanity.

He laughed and laughed because he understood
 How good these people were, laborious,
 Methodical, efficient in their rude
 But scientific cult of barbarous
 Old life on which their nationhood,
 Like ours, is built. He laughed at all the fuss
 They made to give themselves the confidence
 They'd lost in turning back from common sense.

He thought : " How like the English ! " who had done
 The same. " How like ! and yet there's more vitality
 In the monstrosity that's here begun
 To eat away the heart of German quality.
 But both make soup of what the French have run
 With *Liberté*, *Fraternité*, *Egalité*.
 If I could only find my Katje we would show
 These scientific fools what Love can know."

Square heads and large round spectacles—these seemed
 Rather new insects than a type of Man.
 He thought of ant-hills where the insects teemed
 And moved with blind obedience to the plan
 Of the community through which there gleamed
 Not one small vestige of the light which can
 Shine through all life and join with Heaven's light
 To reach the soul through darkest mental night.

Perceiving this, no longer operative
 Seemed Germany to Noel as he went
 From town to town, but deeply emblematic
 Of what was coming when the force was spent
 That made old Europe, feudal, hieratic,
 Where men believed that they by God were sent
 To save the world from slipping into Hell—
 As if God could not do it very well,

If so He chose, though never yet has He
 Shown any sign of sparing men the full
 And awful consequences of rapacity,
 Though, if He chose, He surely could annul
 The fearful issue of their blasphemy,
 When life is flayed and there is shown the skull
 That grins behind the smile we try to put
 Upon a life that's always going "phut."

Still there are always solaces. The weed
 Is cheap in Germany and good cigars
 Are twopence each, that no man therefore need
 Exert himself to dream among the stars.
 While there's tobacco dreams are free to breed
 Upon smoke-clouds that slip through social bars.
 Taboo tobacco! There would be an end
 Of every hope that men may some day mend.

When Raleigh brought tobacco from the West,
 He brought release, a change in human thinking;
 Men learned to doubt if they were so much blest
 As they had thought. The feudal world was sinking,
 And with it all the love and faith and zest
 Which kept that world from festering and stinking.
 Tobacco fumigated thought and kept
 That much awake while all else human slept.

When thought's awake and life is fast asleep,
 Then what is done is monstrous and fantastic;
 Distortions into every action creep,
 Make gestures stiff and movements inelastic:
 Perceiving this made Noel want to weep
 As he observed the transformation drastic
 In German life and good old German ways—
 The German Frau forced into English stays.

So for a time to Dresden he withdrew
 To learn the language with a learned Herr
 Professorrat Von Bun, who all the new
 And mechanistic life detested. Rare,
 Incomparable, in his fervid view,
 Were Goethe, Schiller, the great Weimar pair.
 And Heine, Herder, Schlegel-Tieck and Lessing.
 He spoke each name in whispers most caressing.

A grove of oaks was Germany, he said,
 Where poets made their songs of scent distilled
 From violets and moonlight on a bed
 Of thyme. They were in music so well skilled
 That they could make the living love the dead,
 And join with them until the world was filled
 With song unearthly which had reached the Gods
 Distracting them from betting on the odds.

The Gods were gamblers and they had to learn
 From German poets that the game was lost,
 But Gods lose badly, and they overturn
 The world of men to make them pay the cost.
 When Goethe made the German Gods adjourn,
 They let Hell lose as they to Russia crossed.
 So said Von Bun, and, saying he believed
 This greatness that his Germans had achieved.

They had to fight against the ancient Gods
 Whom poets had dethroned, they had to fight
 Against appalling overwhelming odds,
 Defending 'gainst the darkness German Light.
 "More light," said Goethe, and the foreign clods
 Who could not read him, dazzled by his bright
 Illumination, only felt its pain,
 And wished the Gods in Heaven once again.

The Gods of love and faith and freedom, these
 Were clamoured for by Englishmen and Jews
 And Frenchmen, chilled to icebergs by the breeze
 Blown by the Gods from Russia to confuse
 The thought of men and spoil its longed-for ease.
 Now Europe, said Von Bun, at last must choose
 'Twixt Gods and poets, outworn faith or reason,
 Beauty and joy or blasphemy and treason.

"Square heads and large round spectacles," said Noel,
 "I do not know if that's their choice or if
 They've compromised as long as things will go well
 By changing Man into a hippogriff.
 But this I know, in England Baden-Powell
 Is teaching boys the patriotic sniff
 With which begins the furious contempt
 From which no race that I have known's exempt."

“Square heads with large round spectacles! I half
 Suspect that they are run by dynamos
 Developed 'twixt the liver and—you laugh—
 The heart: You laugh! but how account for those,
 And they are many, who this epitaph
 Deserve: They lived but how God only knows,
 Since neither brain nor heart was e'er employed
 To see that what was done was well enjoyed.”

“The wind blows cold from Russia,” said Von Bun,
 “The Gods would kill all virtue and all sense
 That now may hear the poet's kindly tune.
 Men in their fear accept obedience
 As all the virtue needed for the boon
 Of living, and it is their best defence
 Against the poets who would have them rise
 Against the Gods who have put out their eyes.”

“The wind blows cold from Russia, with the ice
 Embittering the Gods in Exile on the steppes.
 They've had their day, but now they want their price.”
 “I see,” said Noel, “Jealousy of Epps
 And Bass and Harmsworth, men whose power is thrice
 The power that thronged the Heavenly steps.
 For Gods and Angels only made men pray,
 But advertising-men can make them pay.”

“When our Queen died, I saw your German Kaiser
 Symbolic of the age, and now I know
 Him as he is, the greatest advertiser
 Since Barnum-Bailey showed us how to Show.
 What you have told me makes me feel much wiser.
 I don't believe in Gods in Russian snow;
 That Germans are machines is not surprising,
 Their dynamo's Imperial advertising.”

Von Bun went green and yellow in the face.
 His fat neck swelled and goggled were his eyes,
 His every German hair stood stiff in place,
 His mouth gaped wide in horror and surprise.
 But Noel, unaware of the disgrace
 He had incurred, went on with his surmise.
 Michelin and Menier, Dunlop and Lipton,
 Such names made plain the thing that men had tripped
 on.

“Persistent repetition till the mind
 Must act according to the name’s suggestion.
 This, this it is that makes us all so blind,
 That we have lost the power our acts to question.
 The Germans have one Kaiser. We can find
 A dozen of them who our zest shun
 In favour of the habits they create
 To make us buy the goods they circulate.

“The Kaiser is a Bagman with the glamour
 Of uniform, a throne, a great tradition.
 When he pretends to be Thor with his hammer,
 He’s just the sparking plug for the ignition. . . .”
 “*Um gottes willen, schweige.*” With a stammer
 Von Bun implored him to express contrition,
 Or he would have to go before the court
 And make a protokol, *i.e.* report.

But Noel crooned a chant of well-boomed names,
 The Kaiser, Roosevelt, Churchill, Edward Rex,
 Clemenceau, Caillaux, all of whom were flames
 Igniting Europe’s pyre, its soul to vex,
 That it could not throw off the divers shames
 Which they promoted, talking through their necks
 Of Peace that lately had been very plaguey,
 And was to nest in Holland with Carnegie.

The Kaiser, Roosevelt, Churchill, Edward R.,
 Tsar Nicholas, Count Zeppelin, Ballin,
 Friedlander-Fuld, E. Cassel, Speyer are,
 With Rothschilds working everywhere unseen,
 The dynamos propelling nations far
 And fast away from all that they have been,
 That men and women may become the O's
 With which a fortune in a ledger grows.

*“ Der Engländer leichtsinnig hat gesprochen
 Von seiner Kaiserlichen Majestät.
 Lèse majesté! Er sei dafür gebrochen.
 Beleidigung! Der freche Spötter steht,
 Beleidigt noch, Sein Gans ist jetzt gekochen.
 His goose is cooked. The Holy German State
 Must be avenged upon the English spy
 Who spreads corruption with his spöttelei.”*

Noel continued: Lipton, Kaiser Bill,
 Lever and Westinghouse and Cecil Rhodes,
 Cunard and Alfred Jones and Beecham's Pills,
 Hypnotic names through which some rogue unloads
 Upon the market and abstracts his fill
 Of profit, rent and interest, the goads
 With which mankind is kept at joyless work—
 No Christian's lot is harder with the Turk.

Such names are used as Gods were used of old,
 To dazzle men what time their bones are picked
 Of flesh and eke their pockets of their gold.
 Trade now is holy, and its interdict
 Drives out the poor and keeps them in the cold,
 Poor sheep for shearing in a windy fold.
 “O! God,” said Noel, “must men be the same
 Through all the ages, victims of a game?”

"More blind they are with spectacles than when
 They tried to see through unassisted eyes. . . ."
 His thought was interrupted by two men
 In uniform who told him he must rise
 And go with them, for, British citizen
 Or not, he had to answer for the lies
 He'd spread about the Kaiser. Noel thought
 "These men are only doing what they're taught."

So he was most polite and tried to say
 In their own language he was sorry for
 The trouble they were put to through his stray
 And random thoughts. They threw him on the floor
 And sat on him and hurried him away
 Into a prison in whose corridor
 He met the sweepings of the Dresden streets,
 Who must sleep there or on the public seats.

One man had struck a match upon a wall,
 And one had dropped a paper in a park,
 And one had pinched a sausage from a stall
 Just as a dog was snatching it. A spark
 Had fallen from another's pipe: a tall
 And languid Pole had made a mark
 Upon a carpet in a Captain's room;
 And even *they* desired Noel's doom.

Such fearful criminals as these, aghast,
 Repeated Noel's blasphemy with awe;
 They would have smashed the young iconoclast
 But for their holy dread before the law.
 They would not speak to him, outcast:
 A butcher said he'd break his something jaw,
 That he should never speak again, and dumb,
 See all the world to Kaiser Bill succumb.

Unmoved was Noel, for he knew that when
 The sparking plug ignites the cranks must function,
 And cranks were all there—mindless, modern men,
 Who move according to the potent unction
 Poured out for them by journalists with pen
 As mindless as themselves, which is the junction
 Between them and their High Financial masters,
 Who drive them on to unforeseen disasters.

They leave them to it, lend them money for it,
 And make them pay it back with interest.
 But Noel had good reason to abhor it.
 He knew it led to war, though it be dressed
 In sentimental phrases. . . . *Little Dorrit*
 Was Dickens at his sentimental best
 In going for imprisonment for debt :
 But all mankind is in it now, and yet

No one will face the fact and none the key
 Will seek to ope for men the prison-gates.
 Mankind to live must have its liberty,
 Not comfort, in the prison which it hates. . . .
 Not comfort ! That is won too easily
 To be worth while in mechanistic States,
 Huge prisons where in millions men are bound,
 While liberty each day to dust is ground.

After a sort of trial Noel heard
 Himself condemned to be incarcerated
 For two years in a fortress for the word
Bagman, which, it seemed, was far more hated
 Than *Sparking-plug*. To him it was absurd
 And nothing more. He laughed. The Court debated
 Whether his laughter did not merit more,
 And then they raised his two years hard to four.

He laughed again. The four years grew to six,
 And Noel thought it time to hold his peace.
 In Germany it does not pay to mix
 Your politics with humour or to grease
 The wheels of life with laughter. In a fix
 Was Noel, and his spirit found release
 In seeing the adventure as a joke,
 Though it grew worse with every word he spoke.

But in this life things are so overdone
 That one must laugh or sink into a coma,
 Precisely what had happened to the Hun
 Whose laughter was *Verboten* by diploma.
 The Hunnish mind exploded through a gun,
 And hated such a light-fantastic roamer
 As Noel Higgins, who preferred kind Nature's
 Provision for her laughter-loving creatures.

Extremities there are when men must kill
 Or laugh because a joke is pushed too far,
 Before the wise into the fools instil
 The humour of it. And the end is war
 Or satire, bayonet or stabbing quill.
 Choose then, O men, before your children are
 Committed to another fatal joke,
 To end in blood and blasphemy and smoke.

Square heads in *Pickelhauben* look as though
 Their skull had grown a fearful bony spike.
 The want of laughter made these spikes to grow
 From pain, because the world is nothing like
 The picture of it that the Germans show
 To their young men who could not learn to strike
 Because they could not laugh, but had to peer
 Through spectacles upon a world grown queer.

Queer, very queer, thought Noel, as the laughter
 Died on his lips and walls closed in upon
 Him till he felt that he was growing dafter
 Than all these men in uniforms that shone
 With braid and buttons. It was only after
 They'd shuffled him away that he could don
 His sanity again to realise
 The price he had to pay for being wise.

Six years of manhood paid for having seen
 A joke! . . . But that has always been a crime
 Since Socrates. The joke is evergreen,
 But men must never see it in their time.
 Though they may laugh at what the world has been,
 They may not laugh at what it is. . . . My rhyme,
 Which points the joke undying of humanity,
 Won't stop to heed my generation's vanity.

Yet it must stay, for Noel sent away
 To languish in a fortress on the Rhine
 Until he'd purged his joke at majesté,
 Whose prickles bristle like the porcupine.
 And he who came to scoff remained to pray
 That God would send some humour to these swine
 To exorcise the devil that possessed them,
 What time they thought that God had surely blessed
 them.

Imprisoned in his fortress Noel found
 That he was free as he had never been
 Since his young love on Afric's holy ground.
 He could look out with mind and heart serene
 Upon the rocky medieval mound
 Surmounted with a castle, mossy green
 With age, that faced his cell and laughed at him,
 Who'd lost and gained his freedom through a whim.

Serene he was since nought could here attain him
 But by his choice, and he could weed his mind
 Of memories and thoughts that still must pain him
 Until he'd understood and left behind
 The causes of them. . . . Katje must disdain him
 (Or so he thought) for having been so blind
 As to believe that anything could come
 In such a world where minds and souls are dumb.

Here he was free because his silent soul
 In silence could begin to learn to speak,
 To stumble into speech, and let its whole
 And immemorial burden 'gin to leak
 And trickle out to formulate the goal
 That it must find unless it were in pique
 To waste itself in whimsy and caprice,
 Through which its boredom only could increase.

Free men have often been most free in jail
 Where their relation to the world's defined.
 The world of slaves must have their Freedom stale,
 And doled out to them. Freedom is a wind
 Too strong for those who totter, faint, and fail,
 Half-deaf, half-dumb, and almost wholly blind.
 They want enough to drive the whirling mills
 Which give them food and leave asleep their wills.

Now in his cell he read voraciously
 Heine, Lassalle, Karl Marx, Spinoza, Kant,
 Who'd striven all to make their Europe free,
 To see it sunk in European cant.
 A European to the wise Chinese
 Is like a monkey to an elephant.
 Philosophers in Europe scratch the skin
 And let the poison out that should be in.

Sing now, my Muse, in praise of human folly
 That saves the race from going straight to Hell,
 And does what learned wisdom's melancholy
 Can never do, that is, to cast a spell
 Which in a flash makes tragedy so jolly
 That comedy sounds like a jangled bell
 Out of tune and harsh upon an air so clear
 That men can live untrammelled by their fear.

Sing, Muse, of Eulenspiegel and his pranks,
 Of Germans lusty in their merriment,
 Of Martin Luther roaring out his thanks
 To God that He into this world had sent
 Both birds and women from the shining ranks
 Of singing angels who their song had lent
 To men through these two instruments of song,
 That they may right with tunes the devil's wrong.

Sing Old High Germany, my darling Muse,
 And Vogelweide's pearl of lyric ditty.
 Sing, Muse, of Heine, King of all the Jews,
 Who made the German language almost witty;
 Sing Goethe though 'tis fashion to abuse
 Him as a poet and as man to pity
 For being too Olympian to know
 The ways of common men who come and go.

Sing, Muse, that you and I may sweetly tell
 The Anglo-Saxons what they would not heed,
 How German song was just the parable
 Which should have given human men the lead.
 But men aren't human, and they ring the knell
 Of song and rather make each other bleed.
 So sing of folly, take the jester's cap.
 The drummers on their drums begin to tap.

No man, except in prison, sees the sky
 With eyes that understand and penetrate
 The mystery of light that blinds the eye
 Till sightless love is dwindled into hate.
 In prison hate, like crust upon a pie,
 Is broken and true love can rise and mate
 With Love that on the light of Heaven races
 To kindle all that grows in human places.

So Noel's eyes perceived the pouring truth
 That sense of body knoweth not, nor sense
 Of spirit, but is straight revealed from youth
 To youth, from joy to joy, and through this dense
 And earthy stuff of life with tender truth
 Insinuates, that nought of the immense,
 Unwieldy universe is troubled by
 This love wherein truth lives eternally.

But here in prison everything was clear.
 The light of Heaven mingled with the light
 Of his own soul in which there 'gan appear
 One thought, one love, one hope out of the night
 That fell away, and Katje seemed so near
 That he was certain he would have to fight
 No more, but only had to wait a while
 To find release from modern Europe's guile.

And he was right. Among the garrison
 Was a young officer named Biberstein
 Who'd been in London on a mission,
 And, fearful lest his prisoner should pine,
 Began to air his English, and upon
 Enquiry found that they had sung Lang Syne
 Together in the Trocadero when
 The mob had burst in London from its den.

They had acquaintances in common and
 Were soon great friends, and Biberstein confessed
 That he that night had rushed along the Strand
 Completely drunk and more than half undressed,
 And he admitted that he thought it grand
 That crowds in England could be so possessed
 With madness yet not take to real revolt
 When they so easily could shoot their bolt.

“What is it holds them back? The Fatherland
 Would fall to pieces if a mob broke loose
 Like that, and this is why so tight a hand
 We keep upon that guzzling Strasbourg goose,
 The German people, who, it seems, will stand
 Unlimited dragooning and abuse.
 But *Gott sei dank*, if German crowds went balmy,
 They'd be called up at once to join the army.

“That's what the army's for, to keep the mob
 From getting out of hand. We could not trust
 The people as you do. A fearful job
 'Twould be if the Teutonic lust,
 Furor Teutonicus, broke loose. The sob
 That in our laughter lurks would bring to dust
 More than ourselves. 'Twould mean a conflagration
 Which would bring down the pride of every nation.”

“I see,” said Noel. “You are fearful of
 Yourselves. But have a care, for fear's contagious,
 And I have spent my youth in seeking love
 In Europe, where its lack is quite outrageous.
 It seems to me an accident might shove
 Us all into a panicky, rampageous
 Condition which might well be our undoing,
 And make us spill the mischief we are brewing.”

" If we could laugh ! But laughter lands a man
 In prison, where alone he can be free.
 This sob you speak of is a thing that can
 Make slaves of men who ache for liberty.
 We're all the same, but no one has a plan
 With which the hearts of all men can agree.
 For all men want one thing, that is their Freedom ;
 The poets write of it, but we don't read 'em."

And in the Prison was a Polish Jew,
 One Schnabelowski, who had languished there
 Nigh on ten years for having brought to view
 A scandal in a garrison town where
 The soldiers did what soldiers always do.
 They wreaked their cruel boredom on the fair,
 And Schnabelowski had a daughter who
 Was thought fair game because he was a Jew.

He'd languished long, and no one spoke to him
 Till Noel came and made the prison glow
 With his rare grace that shone through all the dim
 And dismal place, which colder was than snow
 Melted with salt. The very jailers grim
 Were thawed, and strove t' alleviate the woe
 Wherewith was filled each dark and dreary cell
 In that small corner of the German Hell.

At Noel's bidding Schnabelowski came,
 With blinking eyes and soul ablaze, to dine with him
 And Biberstein. Then Noel saw the shame
 Of Europe when the broken wretch took wine with him.
 In body broken, nought could quench the flame
 That made the very air about him shine with him.
 He'd passed beyond extremity of pain
 To perfect knowledge making all things plain.

And all the use that Europe had for such
 A man was to imprison him to make
 Quite sure that flame of knowledge should not touch
 The clumsy ignorance in which men rake
 To find the little that they think so much,
 The show of wealth in which they pine and ache.
 And Schnabelowski, though he was a Jew,
 Was far more Christian than I or you.

He'd no resentment, for he saw too clearly
 How men were helpless underneath the load
 Of outworn life for which their fathers dearly
 Had paid in beating out the untrodden road
 Now so familiar that its traffic merely
 Mechanical became and nowhere showed
 The coloured splendour of the ancient dream
 That once had lit all life up with its gleam.

That gleam was dead, and those in whom it shone,
 Those few unhappy, were accounted mad,
 Men looking forward for a time that's gone,
 So calling evil good and goodness bad.
 Yet such men cannot help themselves, and on
 They urge to win what once they think men had.
 A vision which keeps everything in place,
 And decency still potent in the race.

They end in prison. Prison sets them free
 To dream and live, as they insist they must,
 At last in perfect simple honesty
 With men who think them hardly worth the crust
 And water of their captive privacy,
 Compared with which they hold the rest as dust.
 Such were Kropotkin and this Schnabelowski,
 And many another kin-and-off-and-owski.

Eight years in Russian prisons had this man
 Endured before the Germans clapped him in
 This fortress, where a friendship warm began
 'Twixt him and Noel, comrades in the sin
 Of heresy against the Holy Plan
 Of Modern Europe. Such a friend to win
 To both men seemed well worthy the heavy price
 They'd paid for fighting modern avarice.

An hour a day they had in which to talk,
 What time the soldiers drilled, and like machines
 Learned all alike to look and think and walk,
 And ne'er to ponder what their doing means.
 Free are the captives while the free men baulk
 The Freedom on which every nation preens
 Itself. Hubristic nations hurl defiance
 At other nations all enslaved by science.

"Resist not evil," said the Polish Jew,
 A good Tolstoyan. Noel quite agreed,
 But when he saw the light from Heaven's blue
 He could not see why he should run to seed
 In prison when there was so much to do,
 Katje to find and England to be free'd
 Before disaster creeping from the East
 Demanded payment for her Transvaal feast.

And what he learned from Schnabelowski was
 That life in Europe eastward from the Rhine
 Was in a far more serious impasse
 Than in the Western races, who incline
 To let things slide or float away in gas
 Because they've lost all touch with the divine,
 Abandoning the power of a dream
 In favour of electric light and steam.

The Jew could not, but he could fiercely hate
 What he had seen of grovelling submission
 To the demands of a mechanic State
 Manipulated by the rhetorician
 With drugging phrases cancelling debate,
 Reducing all to a debauched condition,
 In which the morning's hope at evening dies
 From surfeit of a Harmsworth's feast of lies.

Resolving to escape, he told his friend
 To be prepared. He found that Biberstein
 Was up to ears in debt and made him send
 By messenger a subtly worded line
 To Rubio, who, he declared, would lend
 A German officer enough to let him shine
 Once more debt-free upon the *Garnison*,
 And Biberstein could not resist the loan.

At once came Rubio to save his master.
 In Berlin he'd begun to ply a trade
 In modern pictures, and he sold them faster
 Than they in Paris studios were made.
 He'd had no notion of the black disaster
 O'ertaking Noel through the things he said
 When learning German with Von Bun, whose loyalty
 Was horrified by Noel's gibes at royalty.

"Good God," said Rubio, "the man's a lunatic.
 In Germany one does as Germans do.
 I cannot understand a man who'd sooner tick
 His moments out in prison than just chew
 His words a little, but must like a tuner tick
 Each note he strikes until he's sure its true.
 He kills a man in France and gets himself
 In Germany locked up, laid on the shelf."

With feelings eased he came with money and
 A dummy passport to the Rhenish town.
 And Biberstein upon his note of hand
 Had seven thousand marks in notes, cash down.
 And Rubio gave him to understand
 That Berlin's pundits were inclined to frown
 Upon the whole affair, and would be pleased
 To have the situation somewhat eased.

But Noel was again magnanimous.
 If he were free, then Schnabelowski too
 Must profit by Herr Leutnant's generous
 Assistance. He would go forth with his Jew
 Or not at all, or he would raise a fuss.
 His words threw Biberstein into a stew.
 But as there was no help for it he laid
 His plans to help the Jewish renegade.

'Twas very galling. It had been a game,
 When nothing else was doing, to have out
 Old Schnabelowski, and to spit his name
 Upon him with the conscripts all about,
 To learn their lesson from the Hebrew's shame,
 That gratefully they'd drill on the redoubt.
 The fortress with no Schnabelowski would
 Be like a wench without her maidenhood.

For ten long years they'd spat his name at him.
 Ten years he'd smiled at them with hungry eyes.
 Without him life would be so dull and grim
 In its monotony, the very men would rise,
 Being deprived of sport. This freakish whim
 Of Noel's made poor Biberstein surprise
 The truth of Schnabelowski's real position,
 Which hitherto had lacked such recognition.

In medieval times for baiting bears
 Were kept in pits and cocks were trained to fight.
 But now we moderns frown on such affairs
 As worthy of the medieval night.
 Now men are kept in dungeons and in lairs
 For baiting, and to spare ourselves the sight
 Of bleeding cocks we train young men for battle,
 And feed them up and pen them in like cattle.

We *pen* them in. But that's reiteration.
 We bait the Jews and men who strive to speak
 The truth that in them lives because each nation
 Believes itself so God-like and unique
 That its existence is a revelation,
 Quant: suff: to animate the black and bleak
 And desert spaces of the human mind,
 Which but for State would beggared be and blind.

So Biberstein, a German *offizier*,
 Who hated Freedom as a Jesuit
 Hates heresy, was forced to shed a tear
 Because he could see no way out of it,
 But had to lose the victim made so dear
 By ten long years of torture exquisite.
 Nothing's so dear to kitten or to King
 As creatures helpless in their suffering.

But Noel had his way as usual.
 Gates were unlocked, guards taken off their guard,
 And on a snowy night when like a pall
 Black clouds hung low, and spotted as the pard
 The ground was ere the heavy snow could fall,
 Came Noel forth to freedom from the hard
 Endurance of his fortress with the mate
 Whom he'd released from anti-Semite hate.

Escapes in modern times are rather trite,
 For, if there's money, there are always trains
 In which romantic fugitives take flight
 Like any other traveller. No brains
 Are needed when the journey of a night
 Can put five hundred miles between the pains
 Endured and Fate, however it may prove.
 In body faster than in mind men move.

His time in prison had for Noel shaped
 His thought of Germany and German life.
 And though he had so prudently escaped,
 He was to this idea as to a wife
 So wedded that his very soul was draped
 In mourning for the cataclysmic strife
 That could not help but come of such a prison
 As that which over Europe had arisen.

The stones of churches stood on every hand,
 The love that raised them withered yesterday,
 And loveless stones make prison walls that stand
 Till Love springs forth to sweep them all away.
 Yet Love's denied, and men and women band
 Themselves together for the tragic fray
 To which they're driven for the holocaust
 Wherein themselves not Love they will exhaust.

For Love is inexhaustible, while men
 Have but their little lives which, even counted
 In millions, are but straws that crumble when
 Real hardships of the soul must be surmounted.
 Take, Love, O take my never resting pen
 That there may be some few who, still undaunted,
 Will turn to thee when human powers fail,
 Well knowing that Love only can prevail.

That thought was Noel's as he eastward turned
 With Jew ecstatic and Jew sinister,
 With Schnabelowski from whom he had learned
 The peace that dominates the human stir-
 About : with Rubio, through whom he yearned
 To find his Katje and to join with her
 In making love-sweet music in the stillness
 That crept o'er Europe in its mortal illness.

Now Rubio had traced the Dutch girl, and he heard
 That she was singing on the German stage
 In opera. He'd written, but no word
 Had Katje answered. Noel in his rage
 Beat Rubio for leaving him interred
 In prison for those weeks which seemed an age
 Now that he'd found a clue to aid his quest
 Of her who was his only interest.

They went to München, where they chanced to meet
 The Gräfin Heringpfeiffer, who renewed
 Acquaintance and the aspirations sweet
 With which on Noel's heart she would intrude.
 He wished her to, but she would not, retreat
 When she discovered that his hopes were glued
 Upon a singer in the Hoftheater,
 Who was its light, its very star and garter.

Night after night was Noel in his box,
 The Gräfin Clara with her dad in hers.
 How Noel's heart upon his brain-pan knocks
 When Katje, at her loveliest in furs,
 Sings Russian opera and so unlocks
 Love's casket where a new creation stirs
 And throbs and moves with promise of new joy,
 That nothing in worlds dying can destroy.

Night after night did Noel almost swoon,
 While Rubio in ecstasy exclaimed,
 "O! God, if she don't conquer London soon,
 I'll eat my boots. No wonder she inflamed
 You when you tried to eat the macaroon
 Of adolescent love. So far I've blamed
 You for it, but I eat my thoughts and say,
 She's great enough to lead a *man* astray."

"She is so pure," said Schnabelowski, weeping.
 "It is a sin that such a soul should be
 Exposed to all the horror that is sweeping
 The world and burning up its ecstasy.
 And yet I think her soul is safely sleeping,
 To wake again when men once more are free.
 The souls of women dare not waken yet,
 Until men dare their handiwork forget."

This Polish Jew spoke truth as Noel found,
 When to his heart he turned and took its truth.
 Thought plunges deep the depths of life to sound,
 But deeper still drives love in stainless youth.
 And love like truth was driven underground
 In such a world as this, where neither ruth
 Nor gentleness nor understanding could
 Let love be free and freely understood.

Night after night sent Noel flowers and
 Imploring notes that she should show him grace,
 Or let him have some hint to understand
 Why she displayed a cold, unknowing face
 Upon him, who with her had often planned
 That they would fly and let the world give chase
 Among the stars, where bridal chambers glow
 For lovers who will leave the mortal show.

No answer came. He waited, and she passed
 Him in the street and in the great hotel
 Where she was lodged. He tried to hold her fast,
 But with her eyes she cast on him a spell
 That froze his lips, and when she moved at last
 He felt that she had known him but too well,
 Yet would not suffer anything to move
 From her to him until he'd won her love.

He understood. Her gift had been too great
 For him to value in his headiness,
 So she had gone, and was content to wait
 Till purest love should move in him to bless
 His need of her and cleanse it of all hate.
 Her eyes on his had forced him to confess
 That all his love had never been much more
 Than selfish joy which from a cup could pour.

“ A thief in prison is more worth her glance,
 A Biberstein who has no wit to know
 A face should also be a countenance :
 Her love would profit more from Rubio,
 Or Garros-If, or any fool whom chance
 To make her merry in her way could throw.
 She means much more and knows that I would be
 More than contented with young ecstasy.”

A bright idea he had : that was to send
 Her Schnabelowski, and she took the gift ;
 She made a friend of Noel's prison friend,
 Through whom they talked across the tragic rift
 Torn in their love by war that had no end,
 Since Britons on the Boer had tried to shift
 The burden of the tragedy. He knew
 That Katje wanted Love complete and true

Or not at all : no makeshift and no mean
 Attempt at compromise or sacrifice
 Of life to less than love. No longer sore
 He felt, but strong and swift and more than thrice
 As sure in knowing that she set such store
 By him that she could wait, although he twice
 Had failed her with the foolish gift of passion
 To others, who demanded only fashion.

For Love's a fashion, like the latest play.
 Sometimes young men are worn and sometimes old ;
 Now artists and now soldiers have their day,
 Now women love each other and are cold
 To men unless there is a bill to pay.
 For Fashion like the Bank depends on gold,
 How blind was Noel that he could not see
 That Fashion was Love's watered currency.

He saw it when the little Gräfin Clara
 Laid siege again more violently now.
 The harp that once wailed through the halls of Tara
 Was nothing to what swept the Gräfin's brow,
 As in a work of Isidore de Lara
 She saw the foreign singer make her bow
 And glance towards the box where Noel sat
 And waved his bouquet and his silken hat.

The Gräfin was an anti-Semite, and
 To see her lover with two Jews was too,
 Too much. Enraged she made her brother stand
 And glare at them until he also grew
 Beside himself with rage and swore to brand
 The Englishman who such an insult threw
 Upon a noble German family,
 To sit with Jews and yet expect to be

Acknowledged, bowed to, *Hand aufs Herz*, and greeted.

He called a brother officer from where
Die Offiziere stood, while others, seated,
 Quailed underneath their cold Olympian stare.
 This officer looked, gasped and faintly bleated.
 "By God! if that ain't Schnabelowski there—
 The dog on whom the garrison at X——
 Has spat these ten long years for William Rex."

Uproar was loose! *Beleidigung! Verdammt
 Sein Juden!* All the officers like one
 Man stiff with rage, cried that their *Amt*,
 Their office was *beleidigt*. Women run,
 Men roar, the music crashes. Noel, damped
 In ardour by the row, just thinks it fun
 At first till green in face poor Rubio
 Cries "God! O God! O God! We'd better go!"

Like one man moved the officers upstairs.
 "You fool," said Rubio. "They're coming here.
 You'd better barricade the door with chairs,
 Then creep along until you can jump clear
 On to the stage. They're used to these affairs.
 They'll hide us till these fools work off their beer."
 "Not beer," said Schnabelowski; "'Tis a woman—
 It always is when men become sub-human."

They made the door fast and then Noel dragged
 His broken Jew along the balustrade,
 Then dropped him down, while Rubio still lagged
 Near sick with terror at the uproar made,
 While women screamed—their fury never flagged—
 And shouted that they'd have the Hebrews flayed.
 And on the stage brave Katje gathered round
 The company. When Noel dropped he found

Himself concealed, and Schnabelowski too,
 Beneath a heavy drapery that moved
 As they did. So they made a passage through
 The company into a room that proved
 To have an outlet, known to very few,
 Into a narrow street. Here Noel shoved
 Poor Schnabelowski into a dark door
 And rushed to see the end of the uproar.

He could not see a sign of Rubio.
 Their box was smashed to smithereens, and still
 The officers were holding up the show
 Looking for Jews on whom to wreak their will,
 Hoping perhaps for seven at a blow,
 Whom they could boast of having tried to kill.
 No Rubio, no corpse, no sign of blood,
 And wooden was the echo of each thud.

Now, seeking Katje, Noel said: "My love,
 For so you are and so will always be,
 You seem to ask that I should somehow prove
 That I'm not false either to you or me,
 Or to that self that raises us above
 Ourselves—our compound personality—
 You ask it and you have the right to ask,
 But I'll pursue my self-imposed task."

"This Jew whom you've befriended is a soul
 Greater than all the splendour of this earth,
 Since it contains within itself the whole,
 And uses it to bring new soul to birth.
 You will not love me now because I stole
 Your love before I'd anything of worth
 To give to love but only childishness.
 I stand before you now, glad to confess."

“Here is no stay. Please find out Rubio.
 I cross the frontier to-night. I’ll write to you.
 You write to him that he may safely know
 My whereabouts. I trust the little Jew.
 If Schnabelowski’s caught, it means they’ll throw
 Us both in prison. If you only knew,
 My Katje, what your love has done for me
 You’d know me deeper than my ecstasy.”

“One kiss before I go! . . .” “No, Noel. No!
 One kiss would mean that we could never part.
 Ask me no more. There’s much you cannot know
 Until you know the secret of my heart.
 There’s danger now. Here’s money, jewels, go!
 Before the soldiers smash our apple-cart.”—
 “Ah, Beauty never lived till you were born,
 My Katje, and my soul in twain is torn.”

“Love fights his way,” said Katje, bending to
 His hand and pressing it against her cheek.
 “Love fights his way to Freedom. Noel, you
 Are strong to aid the helpless and the weak.
 For some time yet in love we must be two
 Before one soul for Love and us can speak.
 Good-bye! Good-bye! We’ll burn away the shame
 Of life when all the world of men’s aflame!”

Strange words were these, and Noel felt the heat
 Of flames upon his brow and on his soul,
 The fire in which he knew that he must meet
 The truth to purify and make him whole.
 More than her beauty must his spirit greet
 Ere he and she could set out for the goal
 Marked out for them and all whom courage dares,
 To win through flame and mount the golden stairs.

He left her thus with senses all aquiver,
 To liberate his being for the meeting,
 Wherein his truth in Truth should sink and shiver
 Into winged life, where angel's wings are beating
 What time they sing above the infant river
 Of love that gushes forth, the sunlight greeting
 With light so clear that frail and mortal eyes
 Can never see it save in love's surprise.

From heart of woman brooding on the race
 Comes human love to seek the heart of man,
 Demanding from it love endued with grace.
 So loves are born while saints and heroes plan
 To make this earth a fair and worthy place,
 And mankind truly worthy to be Man,
 Through whom all joy, all ripeness, find increase,
 To make dark death and devastation cease.

Returning by the staircase, Noel found
 Poor Schnabelowski lying where he'd thrown him,
 Upon a foul and stinking garden mound,
 In such a state that it was hard to own him.
 The Jew said only : " This has fitly crowned
 My life in Germany." " They could but stone him,"
 Thought Noel, with St Paul at Ephesus
 Upon his mind. " What's Germany to us,

Or we to Germany that we should mind
 A smell or more or less? We have before us
 The task which ever lies before mankind,
 The fighting down of forces that ignore us
 Because they are, and we can not be blind,
 But have to find the Love that can restore us
 When we have given all we have to give,
 That those who follow us may better live.

"Come now we'll go to folk half-civilised.
 We'll take a train-de-luxe to Buda-Pesth.
 There life must be less thoroughly disguised,
 And there at least we two will find a rest.
 We may find men who will not be surprised
 And horrified at truth like these possessed
 And scientific Germans who aspire
 To be as Gods without or love or fire."

And as they crept through darkness to the station,
 The air was filled with tramp and tread of feet.
 On, on and on, it seemed the entire nation
 Was passing through one tall and narrow street.
 Their blood ran cold. They longed for a cessation,
 Yet still went on the ruthless, rhythmic beat.
 Shod, shuffle, shod. So sounded Germany
 In leaden shoes trampling eternity.

CANTO SIX

CANTO VI

THE tramp of feet, the chatter of train wheels
Fought hard in Noel's mind to capture it,
Until the numbness of exhaustion steals
Over his senses. . . . Let him rest a bit,
Dear Muse, while we select the reels
Of this our cinema, where play of wit
And fancy serves instead of a machine
To show the wicked world as it has been.

Things just so strange we show that, though they did
Indubitably happen, they are quite
Incredible. Still we will make our bid
Before historians begin to write
To be believed by squirting like a squid
A cloud of ink to obfuscate the sight
Of the small number of posterity
Who'll care a damn about this century.

Truth in our epic lives because she's used
To living at the bottom of a well,
And so in satire she is introduced,
For truthful books are those which do not sell.
Truth is the one thing commerce cannot boast,
Wherefore my Muse and I have tried to tell
It to the better educated race
Who'll take the present bloody white man's place.

Chinese, Hindu, the fur-clad Eskimo,
 Strange peoples from unknowable Brazil
 Will have their turn, and they will surely throw
 More light than we who've done our job so ill
 That, since the Grecian Archipelago
 Gave us the part which we have tried to fill,
 Each generation's crushed beneath the weight
 Of all its predecessors' lust and hate.

All we can show is wagons-lits, hotels,
 Electric light, hot water, telephones
 And telegrams, and advertising swells
 Who use these things until they talk in tones
 Mechanical as any of Miss Dell's
 Machine-made novels, and they make no bones
 About humanity, the raw material,
 Which they employ to make a world Imperial.

Imperial America! Salute
 The god-machine, the Man-machine, the child
 Almost machine, to whom the human brute
 Is harnessed, while the human soul defiled,
 Denied, debauched, stands horrified and mute
 Over the very hearts of men beguiled,
 Their eyes bedaubed or plucked out from the sockets,
 While Trusts and Kartels empty out their pockets.

The kangaroo's the only other creature
 That has a pocket, but she uses it
 To bear her young. In men this oddest feature
 Is used to bear the fruits of thievish wit.
 By thieving only Man's contrived to beat your
 Creation, God, and you were badly bit
 When having taken such a lot of pains
 To give man Soul you baffled it with Brains.

With brains enough to steal, yet not enough
 To know exactly where to draw the line,
 We turn this life into such sorry stuff
 That we can't bear the sun and moon to shine,
 But want to steal them too, and try to bluff
 Each other into letting them decline
 Into a golden sovereign and a silver shilling,
 That we might spend on whoring and on swilling.

Cold shone the moon as out of Germany
 Passed Noel and his prison-mate in flight.
 Warm shone the sun upon the wagon-lit
 After a very anxious, restless night,
 Both being fearful lest they both should be
 Arrested at the frontier at sight.
 But Noel looked so fine an Englishman,
 And he made friends with an American.

A real American with shoulders padded,
 Gold teeth, cigar, a roll of paper notes.
 His name was John P. Root, he said, and added,
 He'd made his fortune out of Shredded Oats.
 To spend it he and family had padded
 O'er half the world in railway-trains and boats,
 And now, he said, in accents bored and jerky,
 He'd heard there was a war to knock-out Turkey.

He'd seen Niagara, the Taj Mahal,
 And Fuji Yama and the Coliseum,
 Mount Everest, the Pyramids, the Wall
 Of China, Kipling's House, the Athenæum
 (Where Bishops dine), Stratford-on-Avon, all
 The Colleges at Oxford. He could see 'em
 'Most any day in photographs again.
 But when he heard that men were being slain

Only three days away he had to take
 His chance of seeing this peculiar,
 Old-fashioned custom for his children's sake,
 That they might know what once was meant by War.
 Besides, he hoped another pile to make
 By selling Shredded Oats, for battles are
 The prelude to a famine which provides
 An opportunity for business with both sides.

Then Noel noticed that the travellers
 Upon his train were men of every nation,
 Officials, diplomats, and officers
 And business men all in the agitation
 That he had seen when death approaching stirs
 The vultures up to wingèd animation.
 And there were men who sat at little tables,
 Already writing lurid battle cables.

"I've lived in war," said Noel to his friend.
 "This stirabout is like my native air
 To me, for I have seen my boyhood bend
 And almost break with more than it could bear
 Beneath a strain I thought would never end.
 War ruined me and mine, and I could swear
 'Twill be my lot to find my soul's salvation
 Through war and all its deadly degradation."

Prophetic words! He knew not yet how true!
 But only hoped that here he'd chance to find
 The manhood which to Katje was full due,
 And yet was far from his too youthful mind.
 He turned towards his pale, prophetic Jew,
 Whose face was prison-grey and deeply lined
 With concentrated thought, clairvoyant dreams,
 The burning truths with which such vision teems.

But Schnabelowski loathed with all his soul
 The business tourist, whose indifference
 Removed him to the very farthest pole
 From his humanity whose tortured sense
 At once could apprehend and grasp the whole
 Black tragedy that glowed with an intense
 And Hellish fire among the Balkan peoples,
 Till blood should drown the very domes and steeples.

He could not speak. His mind and soul were lashed
 With flail-like blows by everything around him.
 It was too much that he so soon had crashed
 Into the horror that had coldly ground him
 Into a broken wretch whose mind had dashed
 So far ahead that life was free to pound him,
 Defenceless, into what he had become,
 An intellect condemned to live with scum.

Not having lived, life was to him as God,
 And now he felt the scum was slowly rising,
 Churned up with soldiers' feet. Shod, shuffle, shod.
 And to this tourist it was just surprising
 A thing to see, a sight that, on the nod,
 The tourist takes his wife aside advising
 That she should wait while he attends the guide—
 He'll tell her later what he saw inside.

This curiosity of the unmoved,
 This prying, peeping into things best hidden,
 This reading of *graffiti*—all this proved
 To Schnabelowski that the human midden
 Is all that modern men-machines have loved,
 The only feast to which they can be bidden.
 He looked at all the correspondents writing
 To feed all Europe with their tales of fighting.

He could not speak. What could he find to say?
 The man-machine had come to gaze upon
 The tragedy of Man for which he'd pay
 The market-price, and then he'd travel on
 To sell his Shredded Oats in cartons gay,
 Known everywhere like Pond or Antipon
 Or Heinz Baked Beans or Carter's Liver Pills,
 And the tobaccos of the firm of Wills.

As those who make a scandal are far worse
 Than those who sinned: as those who fill
 From wretched slums an over-bulging purse
 Are viler than the vile, so those who kill
 The time, which they allow to be the curse
 Of their dull lives, by watching others swill
 The cup of tragic life are baser far
 Than those who throw their lives away in war.

That journey with the scribbling journalists,
 The men who trade in war and war's munitions,
 The high officials and the strategists
 Sent by their governments on secret missions,
 Was worse to Schnabelowski than the twists
 And tortures of the horrible conditions
 In which in prison and in poverty
 He'd spent his life to be in spirit free.

Nothing had made his spirit long to cry
 Out "Murder!" or his fingers itch to clutch
 The throat of all the men who sauntered by,
 To shake them into feeling that the touch
 Of Death was on them all, while men could die
 And other men think only of the much
 In money and in fame that could be made
 By slaughter organised into a trade.

But John P. Root went talking on and mixed
 A cocktail half an hour before each meal.
 He reckoned he would see old Turkey fixed,
 And guessed he'd find a man to do a deal
 In Bucharest and when the Turks were styx'd,
I.e. done in, his friends and he would feel
 Some call to guy them up with all the best
 And latest dodges of the Middle West.

Then Schnabelowski howled and had a fit.
 Nigh twenty years in prison had unmanned him.
 But John P. Root, convinced that he was It,
 Heard Noel speak, but could not understand him.
 That men should feel surprised his Yankee wit.
 While Noel held his friend and gently fanned him
 He took his grip and with a friendly grin
 Produced a famous patent medicine.

But till the train ran into Bucharest
 Poor Schnabelowski lay in agony.
 His thin hand fumbling underneath his vest
 To feel his heart to make quite certain he
 Had such a thing, and therefore all the rest
 Most probably had hearts, though he could see
 No sign except in Noel that they beat
 To make the warmth in which true souls can meet.

Silver and green the olives on the slopes,
 Purple and brown the sun-drenched ragged hills,
 Sea-blue the sky restoring Noel's hopes,
 White wine the air that all his spirit thrills,
 So that he feels that he no longer gropes,
 As youth must do, but certainly fulfils
 Each power, each gift, each impulse of his being
 In every act and form of life agreeing.

As from the train he slipped he found he'd left
 The Western World with all its haste and flurry.
 He'd passed into a life not yet bereft
 Of dignity nor yet roused to the hurry
 By which the purposes of men are cleft,
 That like bewildered rabbits they must scurry
 From hole to hole, from town to town in haste,
 Undisciplined, unhinged, undone, unchaste.

The train de luxe looked like a dragonish
 And fearful monster flown from darkest Hell,
 And round it darted in a feverish
 Excitement men and women, by its spell
 Enchanted, and it seemed it was their wish
 To exorcise this demon with its fell
 Designs upon their medieval peace
 In which my hero found a new release.

For here were faces full of innocence,
 Though many were extremely villainous,
 And looked as though they would for eighteen pence
 Do murder foul without the slightest fuss,
 But with a childish glee in speeding hence
 A soul with carving knife or blunderbuss.
 And as he stood among the Balkan rabble,
 Noel was soothed and charmed to hear their babble.

They talked so much, but nothing had to say.
 They waved their hands and showed their shining teeth.
 Such teeth as Western nations have to pay
 The dentist for. A knife flashed from its sheath,
 A blow was struck, a general affray
 Arose, but no one seemed to mind. Beneath
 The notice of the Bucharest police
 Seemed such a mild disturbance of the peace.

A welcome to the Balkans! John P. Root
 Took photographs of this delightful brawl,
 And stood in hopes that they'd begin to shoot
 To give him pictures which he'd show to all
 His friends as WAR, the natural pursuit
 Of Balkan peoples, cut-throat brigands all.
 But soon 'twas over and no blood was shed,
 And he'd no chance to photograph the dead.

They parted company, the fugitives
 Sent cables to Berlin to Rubio,
 While John P. Root, in whom one passion lives,
 Big Business, set about to make a show
 For Shredded Oats, while Schnabelowski gives
 Full vent to all the hatred he must owe
 That Western brigand with his golden smile
 Come to corrupt the Balkans with his guile.

But Noel laughed and said it did not matter,
 And John P. Root was just as innocent
 As these barbarians. His childish patter
 Was all of boyish bluff and swagger blent.
 He knew not what he did, and all his chatter
 Only revealed his blank bewilderment.
 He did not know the share his business had
 In driving poor humanity half mad.

"Why should he not have pictures of the things
 That lie whole worlds away from what he knows?
 His mind's a blank. His photographing brings
 Some knowledge home to melt the frozen snows
 Upon his brain that cramps his spirit's wings
 So that he's always straining on his toes
 To get a peep of life which he can't live.
 Dismiss him from your mind, my fugitive."

But Schnabelowski shook his head, explaining
 That nought but evil could come out of it.
 He seemed to think that John P. Root was feigning,
 And he declared the biter would be bit,
 And those who kept the Balkan peoples straining
 In bloody war would have their weasands slit.
 "We'll see this war," said Noel, "and we'll aid
 The wounded and repair the havoc made."

They found a Scottish doctor who had come
 To profit by so wonderful a game
 For surgical experiment. He was nigh dumb
 With shyness, and Mactavish was his name.
 Silent, morose, and most uncommon glum,
 Only a wound could kindle him to flame.
 When Noel offered money and two men,
 He drew up an agreement there and then.

For fifty pounds a month he would agree
 To take them with him for his ambulance,
 Which he averred would very shortly be
 Attached in an approaching new advance
 To the Bulgarian artillery.
 Mactavish hoped with them to get his chance
 To show that amputation on the spot
 Could pulverise the antiseptic lot.

"Extraordinary," Noel thought, "how war
 Brings out the latent mania in men!
 I don't suppose this man's peculiar,
 He simply wants to prove his point and then
 Go home to show what fools the others are.
 Perhaps we're all the same, and only when
 We know what fools we are can we commence
 To listen to the voice of common-sense."

A fortnight spent in running to and fro
 From consulate to consulate with signed
 And countersigned authority to go
 And come, seemed as 'twould never end.
 Z. Schnabelowski passed as Rubio,
 An English Jew, franked by his English friend.
 For in Roumania the wretched Jews
 Mayn't put their noses up out of the stews.

By train they journeyed slowly day and night
 Until the railway ended in a pass
 Impregnable, when there was such a sight
 As would perturb even a heart of brass.
 Thousands of men in war-like raiment bright,
 Seen through an air so clear 'twas like a glass,
 To show in vivid detail all the scene
 Against the mountains brown and olive-green.

The shifting thousands moved about their tasks
 With indolence as on a holiday.
 Mules to a river swung with water casks,
 And to and fro the nodding heads did sway,
 While men with faces hid in fearful masks
 Danced round their fires and made a powder-play.
 On looking closer Noel saw that what
 He took for masks were faces smeared and hot.

Romantic at a distance, at close quarters
 The scene was foul and filthy beyond words.
 From miles around the peasants brought their
 daughters
 And sold them with stale bread and goat-milk curds,
 And beads and trinkets, scents and coloured waters,
 Charms, amulets and horns brought by the herds
 From cattle perished on the blasted hills,
 And simples to avert all soldiers' ills.

To save a lovely child from being sold
 Unto a fearsome Tartar Noel bought
 Her for her two hands full of gold,
 Almost the whole of what he'd brought
 With him, but it was wealth untold
 To Dvinka, who, convinced that God had sought
 Her out, knelt down and prayed that she might be
 The mother of a new divinity.

A childish prayer which did not move the Tartar,
 Who muttered vengeance in his lousy beard.
 He always killed when he was done in barter ;
 No man in all the army was more feared.
 He drew and stuck his knife into his garter,
 And told his meaning with a gesture weird.
 He measured six feet seven in his socks,
 And as they had been marbles played with rocks.

He raised one now, about a hundredweight,
 And held it o'er his head, from hand to hand
 Caressed it while he glared his baffled hate,
 Then hurled it down and snorted like a band
 Of bagpipes to suggest the horrid fate
 Awaiting him who ventured to withstand
 A Tartar who had slain whole populations,
 And now had come to decimate the nations.

But Dvinka, glorying to have escaped,
 Grinned hatred at him, spat upon his rock,
 Then as he scowled, his scowl she aptly aped,
 Then took a knife and cut a raven lock
 And tossed it to him, while the giant gaped
 And stamped to make the whole earth feel the shock
 Of his just wrath at having been turned down
 By people who weren't frightened by his frown.

So like a dog who's barked enough to show
 That he has teeth, he turned and shambled off
 With curses hot enough to melt the snow
 Upon the mountains, could they heed the Tartar toff,
 But mountains let poor humans come and go
 And vent their rage like Prozipoponoff
 (The Tartar's name) and never make a sign
 To show that men, like they, are stuff divine.

Ah! if they could! But mountains have no eyes
 As men have, though they will not learn to use them
 Except to single out a longed for prize.
 Alas! that, having eyes, we should abuse them!
 The light that shines through them should make us
 wise.

The very stars bring love but we refuse them.
 And so it is that blind men often see,
 Far more than seeing men, divinity.

Then Dvinka knelt in awe at Noel's feet
 And kissed his boots. He tried then to explain
 That he desired her with her Dad to beat
 Her homeward way. She sobbed, and tears like rain
 Fell down her cheeks and blistered with their heat
 Her cheeks until she looked unpleasant, and quite plain,
 And in her language she declared she'd rather
 Go with the Tartar than return to father.

The Doctor acted as interpreter,
 Assuring Noel that the girl would cling
 As women do who've found a purchaser,
 Both East and West, for purchase is the thing
 That women understand, and they prefer
 Such commerce to the futile bargaining
 With vague emotions which men strive to use,
 Not knowing how their women them abuse.

Such frankness tickled Noel as he saw
 How foolish he had been with women like
 The Clement-Cluny clinging to the law,
 And Juliette Dupuy prepared to strike
 And scratch and maul him bloody with her claw
 Directly her emotions seemed to spike
 The bargain she had made with her Brazilian,
 Who'd promised her three-quarters of a million.

For thirty pounds this Balkan maid regarded
 Her lot as sealed, and she was Noel's slave.
 His generosity should be rewarded
 By her devotion secret as the grave.
 Like other women she was not retarded
 By his extreme reluctance to behave
 As she expected, and to rain caresses
 At evening when she showered down her tresses.

Long raven locks she had, an olive skin,
 Eyes black as coals, and she was lithe and slender
 And beautiful enough the love to win
 For which so wantonly she offered tender.
 But Noel's heart would never let her in.
 It could not give nor could it even lend her
 What had been Katje's always and would be
 Hers only through all immortality.

Poor Dvinka flirted with the Doctor, but
 In vain. She could not make her master jealous.
 The Doctor said she was a wanton slut,
 And sent her elsewhere with her far too zealous
 Devotion to the arts with which Eve cut
 The race adrift from Paradise to swell us
 With passions that so hotly breed illusion
 As to confound this sinful life's confusion.

She tried with Schnabelowski, but the Jew,
 Who learned her language quickly, kindly told her
 That Englishmen all struggle to be true
 To their own women. Dvinka only rolled her
 Big flashing eyes and bluntly asked him who
 Was Noel's love that she had made him colder
 Than ice, north wind, or melting snow in spring.
 The Jew refused to tell her anything.

Night after night as with the army they
 Advanced through mountains and through dark
 ravines

Did Dvinka struggle on to get her way,
 And almost nightly were the lurid scenes
 With which she strove to make her master pay
 Her court and cease to think of Might-Have-Beens.
 In vain her sighs were thwarted when he smiled
 And treated her as what she was, a child.

He liked her frankness as a real relief
 From western women's humbug. He enjoyed
 The vigour she expended on her grief,
 Although he thought she better were employed
 At home in sowing or in garnering the sheaf,
 To make amends for what had been destroyed.
 But her young instinct wished but to repair
 The damage wrought in him by lover's care.

She grew apace as girls so often grow,
 The passion in their bosom to contain.
 She had no shame and plainly let him know
 Each movement of her still increasing pain
 That seemed to come from ages long ago,
 When men and women loved as not again
 They can, since suffering has been denied,
 And Love through lack of sustenance has died.

All in vain droop mountain roses,
 Dandelion, gentian blue;
 All in vain the mountain rainbow
 Hangs its arch from me to you.

All in vain the bright stars shimmer,
 All in vain shine maiden's eyes;
 Nothing wakes and nothing kindles
 Hearts of men to love's surprise.

Sister, sister, weep no longer.
 Men are gone to fight and slay;
 Weeping we must mourn the lovers
 Whom no word of love could stay.

Even women are not sisters,
 Every maid must weep alone;
 Weep among the mountain roses,
 Frail upon the barren stone.

Now the rifle is my brother,
 And my sister is the knife;
 Sister, speed you to my husband,
 Give him death to be his wife.

Wild, weird, and wonderful was Dvinka's song
 Which every night upon the mountain air
 Went crooning, and it seemed to voice the wrong
 That in the wildness brooded everywhere.
 Sometimes she crouched and wailed the whole night
 long,
 And plaited mountain roses in her hair.
 The cold moon shining on the frozen earth
 Seemed to deny the mountain love its birth.

But in the moony light that called the tide
 Of dreams in Noel turning to and fro,
 Not knowing what it was that Dvinka cried,
 Now in his heart there first began to flow
 The deeper knowledge which his love had tried
 To wake in him a hundred years ago,
 Or so it seemed, since Britain's war had slain
 His youthful love that perished in that pain.

So now he knew the agony that swelled
 In Dvinka as she sang her savage plaint.
 Moonlight and she in an enchantment held
 Him till his aching heart beat low and faint,
 And every throb that stirred him slowly spelled
 The name that bade him be a saint
 Or hero, and no bartered love to bring
 To her whose courage was his spirit's wing.

Two hearts beat love, but each a different aim
 Possessed, and therefore all the night was filled
 With dreams and hopes that nought could ever tame,
 And each aflame most passionately willed
 That such a splendour should not end in shame.
 She'd rather see her loveless lover killed
 Than know him smile upon another face,
 And bring her love into its own disgrace.

Poor child! thought Noel. She will soon recover!
 How kindness kindles children to a dream.
 Wild youth can only see love in the lover,
 A love as insubstantial as the gleam
 Of moonlight on the snow, a joy to hover,
 Then fade away as night upon the stream
 Of Time is borne away while day projects
 The light which Time so pallidly reflects.

They'd reached a village in their dreary march
 Where fruit and food and Turkish cigarettes
 Could be procured the palate to unparch.
 Almost a town, its domes and minarets
 Stood bravely in the setting of an arch
 Made by two beetling crags. The mind forgets
 Through beauty such as this its twists and turns,
 And only after greater beauty yearns.

So all the horror of the dull routine
 Of daily marches faded, and enrapt
 Stood Noel gazing at the fairy scene
 In which pure beauty seemed to be entrapped,
 As in great art it has too rarely been.
 So moved was Noel that his hand he slapped
 And pinched his cheeks to make quite sure that he
 Was not still dreaming of love's ecstasy.

He wandered out and never gave a thought
 To where he was or why or how or when.
 The spirit of the place in magic caught
 His soul. He was oblivious of men,
 And all the mighty universe seemed fraught
 With beauty bursting into lovers' ken.
 If men were lovers they would surely go
 Into such beauty, all its truth to know.

At last 'twas more than he could bear alone.
 The play of sunlight on the mountains made
 A jewel of the wind-blown fretted stone,
 The sky was turquoise and the sky was jade,
 While rainbow-tinted with the lights that shone
 Reflected were the lawny mists that played
 Like dreams upon the lightly sleeping soul.
 Ay! In such beauty life and love were whole.

So pondering on what could be revealed
 To eyes made clear with love he turned away
 And slowly came across th' embroidered field
 With gentian and with dandelion gay
 To where the little village lay concealed
 With painted roofs and windows in its gray
 Mud walls which now were shaken with a din
 That shocked him back into a world of sin.

Greeks, Serbs, Albanians, Bulgarians,
 All lived together in that little town,
 Some Christians and some Mohammedans,
 And many God knows what. There is no noun
 To mean the faith that's nurtured by the clans
 On whom the arid Balkan mountains frown.
 Like others it is very militant,
 But unlike others it is free from cant.

You kill a man at sight if you suspect
 His faith may not precisely fit your own.
 You kill because your own life may be wrecked
 With knife or gun or pickaxe or a stone,
 So it is well, if one is to eject
 Another, to be first, though not alone
 If possible, for life is paid with life
 In places where men argue with the knife.

An argument was raging in the streets,
 A Mussulman had killed a Greek whose brother
 Had killed a Catholic. Amazing feats
 Were done in this inflamed religious pother
 Which gathered round a wedding whose baked meats
 Were being laid out by the bridegroom's mother
 To furnish forth the funeral repast
 To which the combatants would come at last.

All had been well but for the soldiers who
 Had marched so long without a fight to break
 The dullness of their days, and they rushed through
 The streets and smashed the little shops to take
 The loot they thought themselves entitled to.
 And then they set to earnestly to make
 The Hell they found more Hellish without knowing
 What it was for or whither they were going.

Huge in the conflict Noel saw the head
 And arms of Dvinka's Tartar throwing men
 Like bricks about and piling up the dead
 As missiles which he hurtled now and then
 When some unheard of blasphemy was said.
 His fearful voice went ringing through the glen
 With evil omen roaring : " Kill the Jews."
 And Noel knew at once the Tartar's ruse.

When militant religions come to blows,
 Their warriors, despairing of an end,
 Are oft directed by a Jewish nose
 On which they can their holy fervour spend,
 To make Judæa blossom like the rose,
 And teach the Hebrew stiffness to unbend.
 However that may be, the little town
 To find a Jew was very near burned down.

The soldiers and the mob sacked shops and houses,
 Dragged women forth from harems to the street.
 And raped them there stripped of their Turkish
 trousers
 To make them Christian, and they were made to eat
 Raw pig new killed, what time the mob carouses
 With blood upon their heads, while soldiers beat
 Drums, gongs, and tins and swell the growing cry
 To find a Jew who like the Christ must die.

Upon his arm a little hand was laid,
 And Dvinka told him that the mob had found
 His friend, of whom a bonfire would be made.
 "They took him and he did not make a sound.
 A dozen men ran down and made a raid
 Upon the camp and all the tents around.
 I thought they'd come to make an end of you.
 The Tartar told them where to find the Jew."

Then Noel ran with Dvinka's hand in hand,
 And in the square they saw the Tartar heaping
 Dead bodies up and faggots for a grand
 Finale to that evening's cause for weeping.
 Poor Schnabelowski, he was made to stand
 With hungry flames about his body creeping.
 He could not move for bayonets that pricked him
 Whene'er he shifted from the flames that licked him:

If ever man looked like the Christ that man
 Was Schnabelowski with his burning eyes
 That pierced through all this horror Christian,
 And saw truth golden through its fevered lies.
 He smiled as light o'er all his features ran
 To show how noble man can be and wise
 To suffer all that poor humanity
 Endures from men whose eyes make them not see.

"A Jew! A Jew!" the Tartar roared. The mob
 Roared with him and threw dung upon the Jew,
 Who smiled at them and listened for the throb
 Of love that sounded in his ears all through
 Their vileness as they lusted o'er this job
 Of giving intellect and soul their due.
 To save him Noel sprang, but he could make
 No progress through the throng, nor could he shake

Off Dvinka's hold upon his arm. She clung
 And screamed so loudly that the mob all turned.
 The Tartar saw her and his greedy tongue
 Passed o'er his lips and, with a torch he burned
 His way towards her while she madly hung
 Round Noel's neck, who through the smoke discerned
 That Schnabelowski could just totter back
 And crawl away into a cul-de-sac.

He had a Browning in his pocket, and he
 Shook Dvinka off just as the Tartar came.
 The Tartar, mad with lust and blood and brandy,
 Came lunging forward brandishing his flame.
 One moment more : the Browning was just handy,
 And dead as mutton was the Tartar's name.
 But Dvinka rushed towards him and impaled
 Herself upon the blow that would have failed.

Her face was burned, her hair was soon afire,
 And down she fell. The Tartar toppled too,
 Shot through the head, to find his base desire
 In death with her for whom he'd led this crew
 To turn the peaceful town into the pyre
 That now it was. Such mischief can men brew
 Out of religion and the jealous rage
 That slays the joy and pride of every age.

Poor Schnabelowski's life-long martyrdom
 Was drawing to its close when Noel found him.
 He knew, he said, that death would shortly come,
 When Noel from his fetters had unbound him.
 Till then he had with misery been numb,
 So vile had been the suffering that ground him.
 But in these months pure ecstasy had lit
 His life and made sheer wonder shine in it.

“Life is beyond the senses,” he declared.
 “Through them we know it or through them are held
 In bondage. Knowing this I have not spared
 Myself one drop of suffering.” Tears welled
 Into his eyes, and Noel felt he cared
 More for this man for whom existence spelled
 Disaster, than for any man he’d known,
 This Jew who’d had the heart to be alone.

The truthful eyes, the haggard, fine-drawn face,
 The lips that could not lie, these stood for him
 As symbols of the more than mortal grace
 Beside which other knowledge is but dim.
 A Polish Jew, a man whose proper place
 Was prison, had made all his life a hymn
 Of praise more potent than the greatest art
 T’ uplift the humble and the pure of heart.

Night after night did Noel see those eyes
 That pierced the veil, and nightly did he hear
 Borne on the night air to his heart’s surprise
 The song of love crooned in a childish, clear
 And passion-thrilling voice. For no love dies,
 But to the loved one it will seem more near
 Than when in daily contact it is foiled,
 Misunderstood, and by misprision soiled.

These two who died of all his loves were more
 Than all save Katje. Even more than she?
 He would not have it so, so great the store
 He set upon that love’s divinity,
 Without it, as he knew, he must ignore
 All that could break Men’s innate slavery,
 That only from the heart can be destroyed,
 And by all else is strengthened and upbuoyed.

No one was punished for the ravished village.
 'Twas but an army's little relaxation.
 Soldiers must be allowed to burn and pillage
 Because they are the servants of the nation.
 What does it matter if they wreck its tillage
 And ruin half the civil population?
 A soldier has to learn his job somehow,
 And there's good practice in a village row.

Mactavish, like the soldiers, was intent
 On getting in some fighting ere the snows
 Brought the close season when the men are sent
 To winter quarters there to toast their toes
 And do such mischief as men do when pent
 Up with each other till their very clothes
 Retain the stink of boredom and inflict
 It on the town like some vile interdict.

And suddenly one day the Army found
 Itself engaged, though wherefore and with whom
 They did not know, since they were underground
 Like Christian martyrs in a catacomb,
 Where they for days could hardly hear a sound
 Except a distant gun's incessant boom.
 Occasionally came the Maxim's rattle,
 But nothing else betrayed a present battle.

Mactavish had to hunt for miles to find
 A wounded man, and bitterly resented
 That those he found but needed him to bind
 A flesh-wound or a jaw bone just indented.
 He grumbled loudly and said he'd a mind
 To go back home to get his grievance vented.
 The Balkan States by us and by the Huns
 Had been equipped with most expensive guns.

So far as he could see they only wished
 To massacre defenceless villagers.
 They did not want vile Turkey to be dished.
 He wrote a letter on the lousy curs
 And sent it to the *Times*. 'Twas time they swished
 The Government with knowledge how these burrs,
 The Balkan States, were sticking to the loot
 With no more thought of war than John P. Root.

The damage done was mostly by the way.
 Such battles as there were were accidental,
 When armies simply could not 'void the fray.
 To neither was the upshot detrimental;
 The soldiers had been disciplined to slay
 But not be slain: that was not in their rental,
 The pay they hoped to get when they retired,
 Their services not being more required.

Some few there were, but they were mostly Swiss
 Or French or German, who were very keen
 For battles somewhat different from this,
 In which the armies were well-nigh unseen.
 Sharpshooters they became and, hit or miss,
 They daily drew upon the magazine.
 The others, save at times when they could not
 Avoid it, did not fire a single shot.

They understood the Turks had lost their backing,
 And they had plenty. They were in no hurry,
 The Turks might take their time about their packing.
 There was no reason why the rest should worry.
 The Russians and the Austrians were racking
 Their brains to cheat each other in the flurry.
 Why should the little nations bleed to death
 To give Great Nations time to draw their breath?

There is, of course, no reason why they should
 Except that they can make a living by it.
 And this was how the soldiers understood
 This war, and they were quite content to guy it.
 Good soldiers always do or else they could
 Not sell their valour to the men who buy it
 And work it on the artificial causes
 Alleged in pompous diplomatic clauses.

Noel enjoyed this cynical approach
 To war which he had always heard discussed
 In awe-struck tones as something that men broach
 As 'twere most holy, almost a great trust.
 He laughed at pukka soldiers sent to coach
 These mountain peasants grizzled with the dust
 And grimed with filth, who simply did not care
 To learn the art of killing through the air.

They did not like big guns, they looked askance
 At Maxims which deprived them of the pleasure
 Of using knife, and sword, and pike and lance,
 With which a man could take his foeman's measure
 And as for bombs they would not even glance
 At them, but each man hoarded as a treasure
 His dirk, his pistol and his scimitar
 As the correct accoutrements of war.

Mactavish was disgusted and complained
 To German, French and British officers,
 And in a little while he was entrained
 To Lule Burgas, where great Howitzers
 Could shew that what men lost pure science gained.
 Poor Science! What a heavy load is hers!
 She bears the blame while life grows daily queerer
 And everything that men desire grows dearer.

Noel went with him and his ambulance,
 And brought in men sans legs, sans hands, sans eyes,
 And some whose face had no more countenance,
 And some whose wounds were festering with flies.
 Mactavish gloated over every chance
 To amputate as though it were a prize. . . .
 One day attracted by most fearful groans,
 Noel picked up the bits of Lumley-Jones.

There were three bits, one arm, one leg, the rest.
 How it had happened Lumley could not say
 Because he could not speak, yet was possessed
 Of all his senses, though they 'gan to stray
 Upon the shock of seeing Noel dressed
 In uniform, whom he remembered gay,
 Rich, young, a figure of some notoriety
 In London's more or less select society.

And Noel thought of drunken knaves and whores
 Rejoicing over such a wreck as this
 Poor mangled body thrown up on the shores
 Of life by death let loose by men who miss
 No joy, no hope, because the Bank ignores
 The little pleasures that make human bliss.
 As Noel's father cursed o'er Cuddie's bones,
 So Noel cursed and damned o'er Lumley-Jones.

He cursed the men for whom life is a row
 Of ciphers which must grow and multiply,
 When either they or human life must go.
 Then human life must pay the penalty.
 A pen could shift the ciphers with no woe.
 But guns are needed when poor men must die.
 And Noel was ashamed to think that he
 Was part and parcel of such misery.

So helpless human beings are, 'tis vile
 That none will help them save the poets who
 Have ever sung the same this long, long while,
 Transforming ancient tunes to music new.
 Yet still at poets bankers fondly smile,
 As they have done since Rothschild's Waterloo.
 I call it his because the victory
 Was his and made him Master of the Sea.

That ended war for Noel, and not only
 The Balkan War, but every bloody swindle
 With which a banker sitting cold and lonely
 Can wreck a country when his profits dwindle,
 And hardly let a stone upon a stone lie
 In his attempt the beast in man to kindle.
 The poets strive to wake the sleeping God
 Whom bankers wish to see beneath the sod.

The reason's simple. When a man has figures
 And nought else upon the brain he cannot feel
 Or think or dream or hope. He only sniggers
 When honest men discuss the common weal.
 That's nothing to the race of thimble-riggers
 To whom Man is a beast who's learned to steal.
 They cannot help themselves. They're hypnotised,
 And dream that life's in figures realised.

As shells had done a skilful amputation,
 Mactavish took no notice of the case.
 And Noel nursed his friend at the field-station
 Until he could be moved back to the base.
 He took him there and watched with exaltation
 The manhood creep back into Lumley's face.
 Ah! it was good to feel that what was left
 Was not to be of wit and sense bereft.

“ Old man ! ” said Lumley, “ what on earth made you
Come out to this queer corner of the earth ?
I came because I’d nothing else to do.
In five long years I had ten guineas worth
Of work, although I stuck to it like glue.
So when the war came on I took a berth
As correspondent on the *Daily News*,
Who cut my stuff to fit in with their views.”

“ I came because Lord Byron died for Greece,
And I was sick of walking down the Strand
And sitting looking at the mantelpiece
In chambers with a lot I could not stand.
And when the corresponding had to cease,
I thought, like Byron, I would lend a hand.
I wish I had an irony as biting :
The Greeks left me alone to do their fighting.”

’Twas very good to hear an Englishman
Satiric, gay, contemptuously chaffing
At everything outside the English plan
As only there as food for English laughter.
’Twas good indeed to see a merry face,
And hear a man make sport of the hereafter,
When, as with Lumley, it was blank indeed,
And only Noel stood ’twixt him and need.

“ I always was a lucky devil though.
Do you remember that old beggar at the Troe ?
I’ve often wondered why you had to go
Just as we made the dear old Empire rock.
I think the other Empire had a blow
That night which must have set it taking stock.
They often say the vanquished is the winner,
Though that’s not true when he’s the victor’s dinner.”

"I'll take you home," said Noel. "I have been
 Away too long. What's London up to now?
 The same old nothing? Same old dull routine?
 Old women at the helm, drink at the prow?
 I've been in prison and I have not seen,
 Thank God, an English paper. Is a row
 Still imminent in Ireland, and is Shaw
 Still slaying hundreds nightly with his jaw?"

Poor Lumley laughed until his wounds began
 To twinge and ache, and he could laugh no more.
 "By God!" he said, "you are the very man
 To wake old England up. I heard her snore
 When we lay anchored in th' Ionian.
 But I'm afraid she'll only hear a bore.
 You have to say the same thing all your life
 To win respect from John Bull and his wife."

"We'll go," said Noel. "We'll go when you are well.
 The continent has got too hot for me.
 I'll get my Jew to find us a hotel
 Where we can stay and take things easily.
 I love my London and should like to bell
 The cat, and we will see what we shall see.
 I don't suppose there's really any change
 To make myself in London feel less strange."

"So many millions cannot pause for one,
 Though he were greater than the greatest soul.
 There are so many people to be done.
 That in itself is quite sufficient goal.
 So long as you aren't looking out for fun.
 Who looks for that will soon be up the pole.
 But, never mind, the son of Hero Higgins
 Should be a match and more for Brother Stiggins."

Soon Lumley-Jones was well enough to leave
 The Greece he'd found more verminous than glorious.
 His arm and leg gave him more cause to grieve
 Than to rejoice o'er Hellas, now victorious.
 More blessed 'tis to give than to receive,
 And he had given limbs and work laborious,
 For which he was not thanked and much less paid.
 He'd done enough in helping British trade.

A boat they found at Corinth. From the sea
 They understood how Hellas kept its fame,
 And still from mechanised humanity
 Won homage for its venerable name.
 They bared their heads to greet the memory
 Of Byron that still burned there like a flame.
 "Some city!" said a voice. "I guess you're all
 Absorbed in thought of the Apostle Paul!"

'Twas John P. Root who'd done the war in style.
 He'd photographs of every Balkan King.
 Still shone his golden teeth as with a smile
 He showed a young delight in everything.
 He guessed his Shredded Oats would make a pile.
 He'd got the Balkan peoples on a string.
 He and his friends would make the beggars toil
 When he worked out his options on their oil.

His chatter never ceased, and as they sailed
 And left behind the racked peninsula
 He turned toward the west and loudly hailed
 Columbia, who through the Panama
 Canal would shortly be (unless it failed).
 Something much bigger than the U.S.A.
 Had ever dreamed or hoped they might become
 When first she taught her drummers how to drum.

The sun sinks down and leaves the smoking East
 To do the best it can. The favoured West
 Can look on idly at the vulture's feast
 That stops short now somewhere near Buda-Pesth.
 And John P. Root has not the very least
 Idea that he mayn't always come off best,
 Or that Elijah's verminous old cloak
 May one day make the Bird of Freedom croak.

Aye! then your parables, my Muse, desert me
 Just when I want to make a peroration.
 A little panegyric will not hurt me
 Or much impede my growing circulation.
 With far too many arrows you have girt me.
 I want them for our visit to the nation
 That bred me and so vilely treated you
 That you have found no one but me to do

Your bidding. Are you bored with my caprice?
 Dear Muse I thank you. There is only one
 More canto ere we end our wayward piece,
 And no more have our ardent thoughts to run
 Into these octaves which some day must cease
 As all things must, including our new won
 Affectionate relationship, which grows
 As love so rarely does on what it knows.

Ah! So much more than woman is a Muse!
 Would every man had one! Would every woman
 Could learn from mine how subtly she could choose
 And blend the threads of life divine and human!
 Then love might be more than a pleasant ruse,
 And even Nature might respect the New Man
 Who'd rise from out the ashes of the plan
 By which men make so vile a beast of Man.

CANTO SEVEN

“ Die Bank, die silberne Seele der Stadt
Und die Bücher, wo eingeschrieben
Jedweden Mannes Banco-Werth,
Gottlob! sie sind uns geblieben! ”

TO GWEN

CANTO VII

WHAT need of satire when the human race
Has satirised itself? I've talked with Swift
And Heine, Pope, and Butler, and the pace,
They all agree, has been too hot, the shift
From sense to nonsense, and the fall from grace
Too deep to leave a word for pen to lift.
Sweet Nemesis in silence takes control
Confronting human nature with the Soul.

What hast thou done, O Man, and what hast been
To end in grim self-parody like this?
Thou with thy joy shouldst gild the moving scene
Where life through thee should bubble into bliss.
Yet life has found thee cowardly and mean
Brazen to kill yet terrified to kiss,
Happy to lie and steal and bluff and trick,
Yet at the thought of Love confused and sick.

If thou, O Man, hast been thyself, then let
The ant, the bee, the wasp, take up the work
Of bringing order to a world beset
With Nature's wastefulness! The fatal quirk
The *I* within thy brain, made thee forget
Truth, beauty, love and honour in the mirk
Of smoky slums, whence, gasping for a breath
Of life, the millions marched to find their death.

What kind of Man is this that will grow rich
 By turning corpses into cash? The worms,
 The very worms, make life of death and pitch
 Their lives the higher for the simple terms
 On which they live and work. Yet Man will hitch
 His life to worse than death and give the germs
 Of madness leave to bring him to the dust
 If he may have his fill of lies and lust.

Amen! Amen! So let it be! The nameless
 Unspeakable abortion Man has made
 Himself must dree its weird in dull and shameless
 Mechanical subservience to trade.
 The young are dead, so innocent and blameless,
 Turned into bonds and debts that can't be paid.
 Amen! Amen! What is there to be said?
 Those who are left are so much worse than dead.

Sweet is the smile of Nemesis departing,
 Sweet as the evening star in English June.
 Late though she was, full thirty years in starting
 Yet she has ended, perfectly, too soon.
 Thunderous thoughts, with silly lightning darting,
 Are all dispelled and we must learn to croon
 Like idiots the wordless chant of peace
 That Nemesis has left for our release.

Um-tiddy-ay, um-tum-ti-tum-ti-tum!
 The Jewish-negro jazz is all our song,
 Ashes to ashes,—Where's dat Kingdom Come?
 Beat the jazz drum and sound the Chinese gong.
 Anguish must speak since all our hearts are dumb
 And misery go muttering along.
 Learn from the Jew to weep and wail and pray,
 And from the Negro to laugh pain away.

O! God if we could laugh! Come Noel, laugh!
 You should be gay with all the world before you
 (What's left of it). Come, boy, and be my staff,
 My prop and stay. I promise, if I bore you,
 To let you go and I will keep the chaff
 And leave the grain of what may hap. Restore you
 To what you should have been I cannot now
 Since Nemesis has ta'en and kept my vow.

When first we met I promised to expose
 The inward lie that gnawed the hearts of men.
 You with your youth should lightly diagnose
 Their sickness, much too subtle for my pen.
 But Nemesis o'ertook us in the throes
 And snatched our job nor gave it back again.
 We at her skirts have wandered through the years,
 Blinded with blood that oozed in lieu of tears.

The pity of it, Noel, O! the pity!
 We could have been so gaily sentimental
 As we set down the follies of the city
 Where all roads end. We never could have spent all
 The passion that we shared for being witty
 What ever happened, since both of us had pent all
 Our courage up to face what must be faced,
 A world too fat, too suddenly unlaced.

The bursting of a corset! So we might
 Have phrased it, you and I, but Nemesis
 Chose just that very moment to alight
 From God knows where and with an icy kiss
 Put us to bed like children and the night
 Came down while she went forth to find her bliss.
 The terror of her tenderness she spread
 To bind the living debtors to the dead.

Not Swift himself could then have raised his hand,
 Or had he done so, it must so have shaken
 As to upset his gall-pot. Nought could stand
 No thought, no quip against a whole race taken
 By tenderness so pitilessly grand,
 So cold that no one but the dead could waken.
 They were awake, the rest of us were sleeping.
 They could endure the coldness that came creeping.

We went our ways, too weary to stay still,
 You on your quest of Katje, though you knew
 That love must freeze. I with a frozen will
 That turned to ice whate'er I strove to do.
 Waiting till Nemesis had had her fill
 Of artistry, what hope was there for you?
 Well, she has gone, and everywhere her labours
 Should help to reconcile us to our neighbours.

Strange tales there are of what you did in Russia,
 Of Dostoevsky heroines and heroes,
 And you, of joy the geyser or the gusher,
 Explaining English jokes to Slavic Neros,
 The Jewish exiles who out Prussia'd Prussia
 And muddled Marx and Christ and wireless'd: "We
 rose,
 The proletariat, from Russia's death
 To poison Europe with our stinking breath."

Strange tales of China, India, Japan,
 Of mystic, cryptic messages in code,
 But I, who know you, Noel, man to man,
 Know what it was that lured you on your road:—
 Your frozen love, your Katje with her plan
 Of testing you till you could take her load
 Of love and song and beauty with the lightness
 Of heart that only could release her brightness.

All roads, all wires, all cables lead to London,
 Railroads and air-routes, ship-tracks have their end
 There where, at present, human life is undone,
 A broken toy that no one cares to mend :—
 So many things to do that there's not one done
 With zest enough to lead one on to spend
 A single moment on the job of thinking
 The staring human facts that all are blinking.

Noel returned to London in November
 1918 A.D. when Hell broke loose
 Society to torture and dismember
 Since what was left seemed of so little use.
 Conscience had proved a spent and dying ember
 The starveling comfort of the close recluse.
 The mob was King and Emperor and Lord
 With Victory its Law and Shield and Sword.

The King of Love my Shepherd is!—Poor King!
 Poor Love! Both crucified by hate
 Triumphant. Now the Mob should have its fling
 And end what was begun by smiling Fate
 When London soused to honour Mafeking.
 All for the Mob and nothing for the State!
 The madness of the world was gathered up
 Distilled and poured into a poisoned cup.

Noel looked on and would not taste the draught,
 Could not for sad sick memories that held
 Him fast and would not let him catch the daft
 Delirium that from the many swelled.
 The Mob had neither memory nor craft
 To know where it was going and it smelled
 Of beer and sweat and mucky trades and grew
 Intoxicated with its odours—Phew!

Cloth caps and cigarettes and shoddy suits,
 Cheap hats and blouses, bad teeth and greedy lips,
 Young men and women who have lost their roots
 And turned their lives into excursion trips;
 New Zealand meat, Leeds clothes, and Leicester boots,
 With these was Noel forced to come to grips
 More than with flesh and blood, for that was worn
 So thin he marvelled how these folk were born.

Cloth caps and cigarettes and sightless eyes,
 Mouths that emitted phrases got by rote
 In some new senseless languages that could rise
 Never above one awful toneless note,
 Broken by women's giggles of surprise
 That they could still be amorous and float
 Upon some half-forgotten dream of passion
 Doomed but to wilt after the modern fashion.

Was this then London, this provincial horde,
 These millions of anæmic pallid faces?
 Noel felt strangely that a strangling cord
 Was round his neck, to put him through his paces.
 Hang then, you lover! We can not afford
 Your high-faluting talk and airs and graces!
 The Mob is King and all are now alike.
 The people rule. The swells are out on strike.

And Noel felt the change come as a doom.
 He in his strangeness was ridiculous.
 Life, getting bored, had woven on its loom,
 This calico that We accept as Us.
 God help the bride who, waiting for the groom,
 Forgets that he is dwindled to this pus,
 This spawn composed of food packed up in tins
 And cigarettes and small diluted sins.

It seemed a joke this Victory composed
 Of death and ruin and emaciation,
 For so had Noel quickly diagnosed
 'Th' ingredients of the loud-rejoicing nation,
 And, sick at heart, he said : " The tale is closed,
 This is the swan-song of a generation.
 One that was never sober for a minute
 And never thought the devil might be in it."

" Drunk with the blood of Dutchmen, Chinks and
 niggers,
 Drunk with the speed of motor-cars and planes,
 Drunk with finance and politicians' figures,
 Drunk with the ceaseless rotting of their brains.
 Drunk with explosives, drunk with women's sniggers,
 Drunk with lost hope, and with their fatal gains ;
 Drunk most of all with emptiness of soul
 That has laid waste the earth from pole to pole."

This is the truth of London and New York,
 Berlin and Paris, Petersburg, Peking,
 Constantinople ; why, the devil's fork
 May prod just anywhere to find the thing
 The devil wants for making his roast pork,
 Plain human refuse that can neither wing
 Its way to God nor find the road to Hell,
 But moves en bloc upon the dinner-bell.

The devil's dinner ! Well, he has a meal
 Will keep him busy for a bonny while.
 Come Noel, you, who still can think and feel,
 Can turn aside with me to share the smile
 Of Nemesis that o'er the world shall steal
 To bring sweet kindness to the most vile—
 I am in love with Nemesis, besotted,
 And care not if King Mob has me garrotted.

Just time enough, great King, to write you down
 The ass you are, a different kind of ass
 From that I am, just time enough to drown
 My Noel deep in love, then I shall pass
 Before you and obey your smile or frown,
 Just as it haps, for on your front of brass
 A smile and frown are much alike, and, please,
 If so you will, I'll be your Socrates.

Or I will be your Bottomley and prate
 Of peace, year in, year out, until th' expression
 Has found some kind of meaning: better late
 Than never. I have something rather fresh on
 Love, Noel, Freedom and the Sovereign State
 To say before Life weaves her cotton mesh on
 What's left of what was once my intellect
 That even I have reason to suspect.

Noel has grown almost past recognition.
 He knows too much and he is much too wealthy
 To stand aloof from London's gay perdition,
 And also he is strong and brave and healthy,
 And knows that Love can never find fruition
 If it is secret, separate or stealthy.
 Love must go down among the populace
 If 'tis to find the blessing of true grace.

A fig for Love that seeks the upper air
 And hides away in terror of life's friction.
 Go, bind your love up in a harlot's hair,
 Or be, like love that will not, a mean fiction.
 Go, give your love where it has most to bear,
 For Love takes all within his jurisdiction.
 Love is the Law, each day is Judgment Day,
 And woe to those who try to run away.

Love's scripture is this life. Love is the smile
 Without which Life is something less than death.
 I tell you this not merely to beguile
 You with the rhetoric that's a breath
 Of air, no more, nor with the purpose vile
 Of seeming deeper than I am. So saith
 Love's scripture, so say I, because we must
 (Be clear on this) not take too much on trust.

Love's law is swift, immediate and true,
 And leaves no barb of bitterness. Love sees
 A fact as fact, and knows quite well that you
 Or I can't see so clearly or for trees
 The wood. Ah! Love, if we could only view
 The world as clearly then we should not freeze
 With wearied horror, but would tremble in delight
 And fill with ecstasy each day and night.

The sight of Noel is the happy cause
 Of this deep praise of Love; a man who threads
 His way with purpose and without applause
 And hardly hears the noise of empty heads,
 Or if he hears it, never gives it pause,
 Still undeterred by what his spirit sheds,
 As shed it must nigh everything indeed,
 If he's to move to find his living need.

See how through London on his grim return
 In this, the slow deep crisis of his being,
 He seeks to find, risking his all to burn
 His way towards what in his inward seeing
 He recognised, though he can not discern
 Its form, whereon, Love and the soul agreeing,
 He knows past question what it is he seeks
 And can wait endlessly until Love speaks.

Yet what a London for a noble quest!
 A boosting, bursting city without pride
 Or dignity, by cowardice possessed,
 And just not mean enough for suicide.
 Instead they'll "Hang the Kaiser" who's at rest,
 Poor brute, from posing as the true and tried
 Club-mate of God Almighty, with a Nap
 Straight from the stables for Hell's Handicap.

(I like that name for Europe's martyrdom.
 I like the language of the Turf—I like
 Brute Man's affection for the horse). . . . But come,
 Here's Noel plunging, where I fear to strike,
 Into this London that is still the sum
 Of all the Londons, all of them, like Smike,
 The long-lost heir to riches undiminished
 Because the tale of London's never finished.

Noel had heard of Katje as a singer,
 And as a nurse, but here he had no clue.
 He had no time o'er memory to linger.
 That she was near him, that he inly knew,
 As surely as the North's known to the finger
 That dances on a compass. Very few
 Of those he'd known in London were about,
 Some dead, some lost in the official rout.

In the official rout:—O! solemn word!
 O! solemn, fatal, awful word, OFFICIAL!
 A tombstone, epitaph of hope deferred,
 Dead, done; a charnel word; a word to dish all
 That strength and force and energy have stirred
 Out of the sluggish human stream, whose fish all
 Sink down into the mud, or, turning side-ways,
 Are washed with sewage down into the tide-ways.

Official! God! A tombstone word that turns
 A man into a shadow and a salary—
 Enough! No more; my Muse's spirit gurns
 At being dragged with Noel through that gallery.
 We'll leave the tape-worms in the dull concerns
 Of nations and invoke the Muse of Malory
 To join us following the modern Grail,
 Wherefor our Noel girded on his mail.

What else was there now for him to do?
 His friends were dead, official, or else sunk
 In propaganda, taking on the hue
 Most pleasing to the Mob who'd drunk
 The poison of success, the filthy brew
 Of demagogues whose shrilling nonsense stunk
 In Noel's nostrils, driving him to find
 A haven and a refuge in his mind.

Somehow this madness of the mob has made
 Him ten times richer than he was before,
 And he was staggered by the figures laid
 Before him by his lawyer, Mr Blore
 Of Blore, Bloggs, Bloggs & Blipton, who displayed
 A sleek subservience to such a store
 Of wealth as would have staggered Monte Christo,
 More than was offered Faustus by Mephisto.

Indeed the devil must have had a hand
 In making men accept the I.O.U.'s
 Unlimited poured out with such a grand
 And vulgar gesture by the trading Jews,
 Who bought the earth on credit, having planned
 To sell it back to us who cannot choose
 But buy it, since to get our daily bread
 We cannot wait until the Jews are dead.

“To him which hath,” said Mr Blore and rubbed
 His bony, clammy hands, and Noel, blushing,
 Felt that his youthful ardour had been snubbed.
 He tried to think of something cold and crushing
 To say, but no, the insane world had dubbed
 Him fool for wasting all his youth in rushing
 This way and that for love and truth and beauty,
 When to make money is a man’s whole duty.

The world is like that, if it cannot kill you
 (To keep you quiet) it will make you rich
 To drug and stun your senses. It will fill you
 Somehow with flattery and untruth which
 Will keep you busy in re-action till you
 Agree that Fortune is a wanton bitch,
 And, though it makes existence too, too boring,
 There’s nothing else but different kinds of whoring.

Noel was not so rich as people thought
 Who babbled of the hero-millionaire.
 (Thought’s a misnomer: thinking is too fraught
 With honesty to live in that galère.)
 They *said* that it was Noel who had bought
 The earth, the Empire—aye, the very air.
 They did not mind. They thought he had been clever
 To reach the giddy goal of their endeavour.

The point is that they knew in their stupidity
 That *something* had been sold and could not guess
 (To see the obvious is not their quiddity)
 It was themselves, sold by themselves for less
 Than Esau’s pottage in their blind avidity
 For clutching the appearance of success.
 Themselves were sold for endless generations.
 They drowned their knowledge in their acclamations.

They fawned on Noel till they made him sick.
 "O! Mr Higgins, you have bought the earth,
 I hear, please let me live on it and stick
 To what I have. The New World has its birth
 In you, so will you kindly let me lick
 Your arse for there is such a horrid dearth
 Of Gentile arses, and the Jewish kind
 Are much too hairy for my English mind."

"Oh! Mr Higgins, I've a little sister,
 A lovely creature just let out from school.
 Too young? My wife then—There you can't have
 missed her,
 A beauty, though she treats me like a fool.
 My cousin—there is no one can resist her;
 Three times a widow—you might like to pool
 The lot—O! Mr Higgins, Mr Higgins, sir,
 You like them old? My grandmother—take her!"

These things of course were never said, but done
 They were most blatantly and crudely.
 When there is money, women want the run
 Of it, and get it, too, in places that are lewdly
 Conducted as our London is. The fun
 Of life and intrigue's crushed and trampled rudely
 When women jump the traces and go guzzling—
 High time, my Muse, for censorship and muzzling.

Noblesse oblige! When women are hysterical,
 One looks the other way—or takes to drink.
 The tenderness of women is chimerical:
 They'll let a man do everything but think.
 That is the last offence, the most unclerical,
 The vice most sure to bring him to the brink
 Of poverty and ruin, though the worst of it
 Is this, that she is left outside each burst of it.

Not Noel, no, nor any man is rich enough
 To be allowed the luxury of thought.
 The very nicest woman can be bitch enough
 To bring her husband's life and work to nought.
 A woman's jealousy is often hitch enough
 To make the strongest end by being bought.
 How long, O Lord, how long the human mind
 Has in the womb of woman been confined!

Noel, beset by women, thought the more,
 The more, in thought, they spent his bank account.
 His troubles with them, bad enough before,
 Were now so drear as almost to amount
 To execution. Sick at heart and sore
 He saw that life was poisoned at its fount,
 The love of man for woman, who to cut
 A dash had let her chastity go phut!

Her chastity, her purity, her grace,
 Her soft ascendancy were cast aside.
 Her skirts cut short that she might go the pace,
 She rode on Man-back mannishly astride.
 Laughing at every grunt and each grimace
 Her steed made as she spurred and galled his pride.
 To fill her belly and to clothe her back
 She set about the whole world's wealth to sack.

Millions of men were sent down to their graves
 While women looted. This, as Noel saw,
 Was Europe's end: the flatulence of knaves,
 Male vigour scrapped to stop the female maw.
 He who had faced so many narrow shaves
 From death was filled with nausea and awe
 To find that life was deadlier than death,
 Sick with the chill of loveless women's breath.

But where to turn? This London was so new,
 So strange, so dull, so frenzied in its boredom,
 And though he searched was nowhere any clue
 To any meaning in this modern whoredom
 (He had to wait for Bottomley and True
 To blow the gaff on those who had abhorred 'em
 But patriotically gave them rope
 Enough to hang themselves and all our hope).

The gentle Rubio had not been idle.
 In Noel's absence he had gently slid
 (Not sympathising with the suicidal
 Unpopularity, his master's bid)
 Into position to exploit the tidal
 Hysteria that blew aloft the lid
 Of Hell and London and the other centres
 Where hope flies out when demagogy enters.

The devil is a demagogue, a fool,
 Who drinks the heady folly of the mass,
 And pours it out in empty words to rule
 The mob and lead it into an impasse,
 Where such a heat's set up as nought can cool
 Save blood set flowing, as a broken glass
 Will sooth a drunkard in whose throbbing brain
 Only a crash can ease the swelling pain.

The devil's like Lloyd George, an ignoramus,
 Dull, empty, fatuous, and energetic,
 Exactly like ourselves, a thing to shame us,
 A ghastly symbol, horribly synthetic
 Of what we are and have been. Need to name us
 There is none, for the most unsympathetic
 Need now but mutter with a rising gorge,
 For all he hates in us, the words Lloyd George.

Bribes, coupons, titles and a secretariat,
 These are the means of modern government.
 What needs to vote the listless proletariat
 When there's no check on money being spent?
 The milch-cow tangled in the cow-boy's lariat
 Is not more helpless than the public pent
 With bribes and titles, coupons and the Press,
 Leading the Hebrews through the wilderness.

The Press? Poor Noel's paper had been sold
 To keep the pot a-boiling for Lloyd George.
 In impotent importance in the fold,
 It beat cold iron in a burned-out forge,
 And Rubio himself had been enrolled
 Among the M.B.E.'s whom t' other George
 (The King), to please the Premier, delighted
 To honour once they had their honour slighted.

Noel was hurt so deeply that he could not
 Look kindly on a Jew of any kind.
 His name had been involved and this he would not
 Forgive nor would he learn the sleight of mind
 That all had learned to help to tie the good knot
 Lloyd George had made democracy to bind.
 The sale of Honour for an honour seemed to Noel
 Hardly with English decency to go well.

Old-fashioned? Well, he had been taught to think
 That manners maketh man, and honesty
 Too precious to be drowned in printer's ink,
 However great the flood of it might be.
 He had believed the ship of state must sink
 Without the compass of integrity.
 While others hailed the future with their Victory,
 He saw their gesture more as valedictory.

They said Good-bye to every old tradition,
 Good-bye to justice, probity and truth,
 Good-bye to every sanctified ambition
 The golden maxims pressed on English youth.
 For in an age of violent transition
 There was no room for kindliness or ruth.
 Ruthless the bounce our bagmen substituted
 For the good form they ruthlessly uprooted.

Europe was bounced into an idiotic
 And panic-stricken treaty which completed
 The crash of life into a wild chaotic
 And sordid scramble. Their own aims they defeated,
 These bagmen who had dreamed of a despotic
 Napoleonic Council firmly seated
 At Cannes or Monte Carlo, bleeding white
 The supine millions toiling day and night.

But once bled white you cannot be bled whiter.
 No matter how the Treasuries might cook
 Accounts, each found itself a bitten biter,
 With War's corruptions sternly brought to book.
 Yet heavy hearts made heads so much the lighter
 And credit flowed adown the babbling brook
 Of eloquence that poured from Downing Street
 And promised Paradise where ends shall meet.

"Look in thy heart and write," said Philip Sidney,
 But what about it when your heart is broken?
 No comforts in the liver or the kidney
 When silence drowns the word the heart has spoken.
 "Down on your knees!" But who can bend the bid
 knee

When nobody at all can show the token
 Of the authority that binds the soul
 To bring all else to the unquestioned goal?

No sign of Katje anywhere in London!
 No hope at all of laughter or of glee.
 A thousand years of England had been undone
 In the dull plunge into dull anarchy.
 (For anarchy is dull. There is no fun done
 When life's released from all authority.)
 Noel in vain attempted to resist.
 London had ta'en the bureaucratic twist.

A tourniquet applied to Europe's neck
 Was twisted tighter week by week and day
 By day. It had not been enough to wreck
 The work of generations and the way
 Of progress, but the birds of prey must peck
 At Life itself their power to display.
 Their bloody beaks and talons shred by shred
 Tore the ideals of the luckless dead.

The worms creep in, the worms creep out, 'tis said,
 About their business, turning dust to dust.
 Not only in the grave; the human head
 Has worms as busy, panic and distrust,
 To creep and gnaw and dissipate the dead,
 Dead thought, dead hope, dead laughter turned to
 rust,
 To eat away what even worms eschew,
 Dead worship of a falsehood as the true.

Weevils and worms and maggots in the brain,
 Women in shops and journalists in place
 And power made so anguishing a pain
 Of what was left of life that Noel's face
 Took on a tortured look, as though each vein
 Was parched and dry of blood, and yet his grace
 And youth shone through this terrible aspect
 Produced in him by England raped and wrecked.

El Greco never painted such a riven
 And yet unbroken countenance and Blake,
 With all his lovely sense of sins forgiven,
 Could not imagine what it was to take
 A share in such iniquity unshriven
 By effort for humanity's dear sake.
 Such a divorce of Heaven and Hell was never
 Dreamed of in lovely William Blake's endeavour.

Eternal horses! Noel for a time
 Turned to the beast that comforted J. Swift.
 The noble horse is worthy of a rhyme
 When men collapse and nothing leave to lift
 The wingèd mind caught in the slough and slime
 Of crisis after crisis left to drift.
 The horse has strength and purity and passion
 Never debauched in our Yahooish fashion.

The horse eats clean and drinks his water pure
 Or not at all. The horse thinks swiftly, brain
 To brain, the horse—but sermons cannot cure
 Human debauchery and love of pain.
 Men will be men and human to endure
 In their strange lust of loss for hope of gain.
 The more illusory that hope, the more
 Into the mud their treasure they will pour.

So Noel hunted with the Quorn and bought
 A string of horses which he kept in training
 At Kingsclere on the Downs, and here he sought
 Some solace as he galloped, fine or raining,
 Across the springy turf and inly fought
 The battle out with all the evil staining
 The life in which he had to live, and strove
 To win his way back to his faith in love.

“Love lets you down! O God, Love lets you down,”
 He cried, caressing Julia’s sleek neck,
 His mare by Juan out of Scarlet Gown,
 Who worshipped him and quivered to his beck
 And nod and seemed to droop whene’er a frown
 Gloomed on his face, “Love, Julia, will wreck
 The good, the noble and will leave unharmed
 Those in whom evil never is disarmed.”

The wild young Noel who upon the steed
 Astonished in the meadow by the Cam
 Had ridden out his blithe ecstatic need
 Was still the same as he who strove to damn
 The love that made his broken being bleed
 From weariness of such a dreary sham
 As Life was in the opulent success
 Forced on him by the crazy world’s distress.

He tried to make himself believe that cantering
 With Julia contained a perfect bliss,
 Enough to justify the lazy sauntering
 He had assumed to keep from the abyss
 Of cynical and harsh sardonic bantering
 That swallowed up his friends who took amiss
 His obstinate belief in something better
 Than their dull loss of spirit in the Letter.

In vain he told himself that Julia
 With all her splendour and intoxication
 Of speed and force could carry him away
 From the collapse and slow disintegration
 Of his own kind. The everlasting Yea
 Of youth o’erwhelmed his grim determination
 And bade him blindly seek, no matter where,
 Some means of letting in a clearer air.

This was a thing that money could not do.
 Money and all the hasty substitutes
 For money were controlled by just a few
 Old gentlemen, who gathered in the fruits
 Of war, the different debts, until they grew
 Past comprehension—and I ha'e ma doots
 Whether they'll ever try to understand
 More than enough to sink their cash in land.

Noel had money and it made him shrug
 His shoulders at the helplessness it brought,
 A helplessness that always ends in smug
 Contempt for men so ready to be bought.
 It brought no privilege that he could hug,
 Except the right to snub the fools who fought
 Among themselves to be the first to fleece him—
 It needed more than Julia to release him.

Yet what? There was no lack of noble causes
 Ignobly advertised by earnest souls,
 Whose eloquence was in the breathless pauses
 They left to show the devil heaping coals
 For those who had ignored the vital clauses
 Of Social Justice, falling back on Doles.
 But where's the terror of the Hellish State
 To people sunk for eight long years in Hate?

No, Julia might gather up her muscles
 And spring in taut excitement through her races;
 Noel found nothing in these empty tussles,
 All, all alike, that went on in high places.
 No matter how the rich man booms and bustles,
 He's but a blinkered nag bound by the traces;
 The wise rich man takes to himself a wife,
 And uses wealth to buy a quiet life.

Who can enjoy the limelight of the Press?
 Who take a pride in modern life's applause?
 'Tis the most dreary, noisy wilderness,
 A thoughtless vacuum without a pause
 For rest or fun or impulse and much less
 For joy to sweep the soul on in the cause
 Of Liberation from the foul decree,
 That sets the verb To Have above To Be.

The verb To Have ends always in To Let.
 So it was now. The London of '06,
 The Anglo-Yiddish Empire which had set
 The world on fire and England in a fix,
 Was like a house the bills for which are met
 In bankruptcy, or like poor Mr Dick's
 King Charles' Head, that got into the way
 Of everything the poor old man would say.

No one but Noel and myself dared sing
 The dirge of England Liberal-Imperial.
 Hot-water drowned us though we had our fling
 And till the Armistice romped through our serial
 (Which no one read but Southall) on the wing.
 England was lost in festivals venereal;
 A three years' Maffick for the lower classes,
 While power to the Jews and Bankers passes.

Che sara sara! But there's nought so deadly
 As power which its owners cannot use.
 The role of hero's passed to Joseph Sedley.
 George Osborne's dead: Amelia cannot choose
 But marry Dobbin and produce a medley
 Of City brats to mind our P's and Q's
 For us, who've lost our poor, pathetic savings
 And are fed up with politicians' ravings.

Well, we have dropped the *Liberal* at last—
 That gone, *Imperial* will follow suit—
 Confound all politics! We should have passed
 Them by or coldly given them the Boot
 The O(ld) B(oot) E(nglish):—your iconoclast
 Can't leave his idol smashed, but, taking root,
 Counts up the pieces in a holy dread
 Lest all the pieces be adored instead.

Suppose instead of one Lloyd George you had
 A thousand! Or suppose you broke the Bank
 And had instead a Lottery! 'Tis sad,
 But true, too true, that never evil sank
 Into the grave, but evil twice as bad
 Sprang into vigour with a growth so rank
 As to appal the young reforming spirit
 Which has forgot the evil we inherit.

Resist not evil. Evil is too strong.
 Forgive all sins. They turn to human stuff.
 There, after years of struggle and a long
 Probation is what seems to me enough
 For wisdom and philosophy and song.
 Laughter will never smooth away the rough
 Raw edges of a life that is too wasteful
 To wait for those who find its ways distasteful.

Come on then, Noel, I have more to do
 Than wait upon your disconcerted grumbling.
 My Muse and I can wait no more for you
 To find a word of sense in all your mumbling.
 We both believe we can discern a new
 Society emerge as yours is tumbling.
 The old has perished of its mean vulgarity,
 The new should spring apace in its hilarity.

Come Noel, bless you, can't you see the joke
 Of you, the lover, being all alone?
 Or are you pickled with the acrid smoke
 Of your own thought until your heart is stone?
 There was a time when you could gaily poke
 Sardonic fun at things, but you have grown,
 Like most of us, so stiff and sick at heart
 That I'm afraid we'll shortly have to part.

We've had enough of moping, grouching heroes
 Imported from the Russian. Where's Tom Jones?
 We want no Bazarovs or pinchbeck Neros,
 But men with laughter in their very bones.
 Dictators? They are all pathetic pierrots
 Declaiming nonsense in dramatic tones.
 A Lenin, Wilson, George, Clemenceau, Smuts,
 Wields nothing but the people's lack of guts.

So we must laugh and go our ways and work,
 Dodging as best we can the bureaucrat,
 Who battens on the duties that we shirk
 And leaves us sore and hungry on the mat.
 Starvation, pestilence and murder lurk
 Behind dictatorship, though it may pat
 Us on the back and make us feel Imperial—
 Though unction to the soul, the end's funereal.

The Press? A Northcliffe, Bottomley or Spender
 Aims at a creeping, slow paralysis
 Of mind and will, to make their job a fender
 To keep the baby-public in the bliss
 Of ignorance, where, at the mercies tender
 Of High Finance, they may see nought amiss.
 Write less than nothing about nothing, that
 Is what your journalistic mind is at.

Aye, stubbornly your journalist prevents
 The less-than-nothing that the public knows,
 From being Nothing. Nullity presents
 Too definite an aspect of the shows
 Put up to hide the glaring holes and rents
 In institutions wherein we repose
 Such touching confidence that pressmen's patter
 Can keep us all from seeing things that matter.

Was ever satire more out-satirised
 Than in this less-than-nothing of the Press?
 The whole of life has had to be revised
 And toned down to this less-than-nothingness.
 Love, art and politics are Northcliffised
 Into a carelessly concocted mess
 Of pottage so unsavoury, that Esau
 (The public) is left single on the see-saw.

That rhyme has been too much for Noel who
 Has very wisely taken ship and gone
 To New York-on-the-Hudson to renew
 His quest of Katje, who he heard, had won
 Her way through Russia and the Far East to
 The Land of Liberty and F. P. Dunne
 (Or Mr Dooley :—even he has shut up
 Since Liberty by Wilson has been cut up).

Approach New York, ye wise ones, if at all,
 Not by the harbour, where the Pressmen wait,
 But sneak your way in via Montreal
 And Buffalo and train through New York State.
 Prepare to gasp, as stupefied you crawl
 Into the Central Station. 'Tis a great
 Cathedral built in worship of the traffic
 That is America, a super-Maffick.

Take London in its orgies unashamed
 (If London ever could be), take the night
 When Noel in his youthfulness untamed
 Plunged into London after love-at-sight.
 Just such a spirit is in New York framed
 In buildings almost—(Noel would say quite)—
 As drunkenly fantastic as the life
 Lived by the taut New Yorker and his wife.

America! Ah! Who can tell the story?
 And who can write of that which is not yet?
 America! Still throbbing in the glory
 Of gambler's luck, with all its fume and fret,
 Can't be described to Europeans gory
 As sick at heart they raise the sign *To Let*.
 America! America a nation?
 A thing that changes every generation?

America, I think, is just a myth
 Created for the emigrant before
 He tumbles to the game, whose very pith
 He is, poor devil, sinking on a shore
 In-hospitable, where he's pounced on with
 A pressure worse than that he knew before.
 Each race in turn has been the under dog
 To worship harsh King Stork for dull King Log.

America, the glitter of Broadway,
 The boost and bluster of the magazines,
 Fifth Avenue, the too set-out display
 Of Easy Wealth, are simple-minded means
 Of covering what else must bring dismay,
 The tricks and dodges of behind the scenes.
 Your Russian peasant landing in New York
 Is like Chicago pig—already Pork.

Yet no one calls the bluff, and in a year
 Your peasant is a true American
 Supplied by Hearst with a ten cent veneer
 With which to cover up the human man.
 He is embarked upon a swift Career
 And ends in being something in a Can,
 Something that clinks and rattles in a Ford,
 And pays its dole to Rockefeller's hoard.

Noel was much too weary to be bluffed.
 He could not see the giddy, happy fun
 Of New York City. Sick of being stuffed
 With lies in Europe, where the thing is done
 More earnestly, he hoped that he had huffed
 His Fate by having quickly cut and run.
 He hoped America would in its youth
 Have some regard—a little—for the truth.

Alas! Alas! *Dementia præcox*
 Had seized the Yankee, terrified to see
 His ship join Europe's on the unkind rocks
 Of war-like patriotic bankruptcy.
 His youthfulness, disgruntled by the shocks
 Of European guile and polity,
 Clutched at the next and most exciting lie
 That war-inflated bank-accounts can buy.

This was presented with a strange new word,
 A Russian word, that sounded like a bomb
 To Yankee ears and ominously stirred
 The Yankee super-business-man's aplomb.
 Debts that the Russian Government incurred
 Had lapsed through Moscow's bold departure from
 Old-fashioned methods called outworn and creaky
 By brazen persons styled the Bolsheviki.

The word exploded through the Continent,
 Numbed speech and thought, and paralysed discussion.
 No Yankee dared appear intelligent
 For fear of being rounded up as Russian.
 There was no room or time for argument.
 The Yank had learned the Gospel of the Prussian
 (Or of the Briton), and by mass production
 Of panic hoped to squash the Russian ruction.

Panic there was from coast to coast, and no one
 Dared ope his lips except to breathe his hate
 Of Russia, Russians, Bolsheviks and go one
 In fury worse than England in the late
 Lamented War, whose fever was a slow one
 Compared with this that gripped the Yankee State
 And filled it with a horror which is traceable
 To Colour, whose disruption's ineffaceable.

The Russian Jew to eyes American
 Is something lower than the negro, if
 There can be such a thing disguised as Man.
 His presence, like the negro's, brings a whiff
 Of physical disgust into the plan
 (Idealistic as the hippogriff)
 Of brotherhood, equality, and freedom
 That Rousseau gave to men as signs to lead 'em.

'Twas such a whiff of violent disgust
 That seized America when Noel landed.
 The War was quite forgotten in the lust
 To be as bitter as the case demanded.
 America must guard the sacred trust
 Of Property, which, it appeared, was handed
 By Washington on Sinai to posterity
 To guarantee the U.S.A.'s prosperity.

Old ladies took their money from the Banks
 And buried it. The Bolsheviks by wireless
 Might get at it and take it without thanks.
 The State Department and Police were tireless
 In getting ready aeroplanes and tanks
 For Lenin, Trotzky, and the other sireless
 And Bastard Hebrews who were smashing Russia
 With eyes on poor America—to crush her.

A hundred million minds with but a single
 Idea is more than anyone can tackle.
 If Noel ever hoped his youth to mingle
 With young America's, the angry cackle
 That greeted him made him with horror tingle
 And almost made him hastily take back all
 The strictures he had passed on British folly
 That filled him with regretful melancholy.

The Anglo-Yiddish Empire of '06
 Was never floated on such unanimity
 As that created by the sorry fix
 Of U.S.A. financiers whose proximity
 To Europe's deadly dazzling politics
 Had turned their heads to *faire le rêve illimité*
Du Roi Soleil—the Bolsheviki stench
 Provokes me to irruption into French.

The Yankee Empire of nineteen-nineteen
 Supplants the Anglo-Yiddish in our story.
 Wherever British lion-cubs have been,
 Now Eaglets fly in search of blood and glory.
 Nothing can change, it seems, the human scene,
 And men aren't men unless their hands are gory
 With their attempts to solve to-morrow week
 Questions of which the Gods themselves don't speak.

There never yet was Empire born so plainly
 In panic as this Empire of New York.
 The Anglo-Yiddish came from muddle mainly
 And ignorance and bluster made to fork
 Out dividends from somewhere. Its ungainly
 Manœuvres showed that it could never work.
 Jewishly gauche, no wonder that the German
 Thought the Great Briton a forsaken merman.

The Yankee can do better all the time,
 Or so he thinks, assuming all the vices,
 That, being National, appear sublime
 Until the bill's presented in mad prices
 For food and shelter, not to speak of crime
 Let loose, for Licence, once set up, entices
 Its victims on with their unsated lust
 To drag whate'er they touch into the dust.

This may be human life, this coarse hysteria.
 Relief from it may be an idle dream,
 Caused by its pain, a weariness grown wearier
 Until it breaks into a fervid gleam
 Of hope—the smile of an old hag of an Egeria
 In whom a youthful poet sees the cream
 Of Womanhood and beauty's inspiration
 Where nothing is but sterile degradation.

Noel, who came to pray, remained to curse
 And, having cursed, stayed on to pray again.
 So heroes do when life can not be worse
 And forces laughter from astonished pain.
 And Noel laughed to see the Yankee nurse
 Illusions that in Europe had proved vain,
 And sail off blithely on the Imperial tack :
 " We've got to fight to get our money back."

“ We’ve got to fight the Mexican, we’ve got
 To fight the blacks in Haiti, San Domingo :
 Japan, Great Britain, Russia—the whole lot.
 They owe us money and they’ll pay, by Jingo,
 If not in cash in work to keep the pot
 A-boiling—Gee! Ain’t we just caught the lingo
 Of Curzon, Carson, Asquith, George, and Grey
 For boosting Empire in the U.S.A. ? ”

’Tis odd that, sailing westward for a week,
 You can go back three years and find grown men
 Still talking nonsense, playing hide-and-seek
 With honesty, and craps with brains—what then?
 When every nation thinks itself unique,
 It is beyond the power of the pen
 To make men see that they are all the same
 In bluffing while they play a losing game.

“ You got to git up airy if you’re going
 To take in God,” wrote Mr Russell Lowell,
 Once Minister to London, bent on showing
 (The job that I unkindly thrust on Noel)
 The Hell to which the human race was going
 In following John Bull. The British know well
 Enough the Hell they make, but they rejoice in it
 And suffer no one else to have a voice in it.

They’re not concerned with God or with His Creatures.
 They are concerned with comfort and security
 And nothing else. John Bull’s impassive features
 Show the sufficiency of immaturity
 And nothing else, though with a guile to beat yours
 (As in the past, so now, and in futurity),
 You more alive, more interested races,
 Who bear the marks of suffering in your faces.

A bland, a blank indifference is the sign
 Of an Imperial destructive nation,
 Such an expression as hall-marked the swine
 Of Gadara and now a generation
 Of John Bull's imitators in a line
 Waiting for Pierpont Morgan's proclamation
 Of Empire built for ever on the slavery
 Of Coloured men agog at white men's knavery.

They waited and they got what they desired,
 A President in power, as Charlemagne
 Had never dreamed of being, and inspired
 By God (or by prohibited Champagne)
 To rule the world by wireless or wired
 Ukase or Bull of war by aeroplane,
 And peace enforced, when war endangers trade,
 By the new weapon of the Bank's blockade.

Enough! John Bull is sullenly compelled
 To take his Uncle Sam into the firm.
 The Anglo-Yid monopoly has swelled
 ('Though, East and West, the Continents may squirm)
 Into the Yankee-Yiddish-Anglo, held
 In equal shares for just so long a term
 As men will pay their lives into the Bank
 Plus interest to the Anglo-Yiddish-Yank.

And so farewell, farewell, I hope for ever,
 To politics collapsed into a swindle.
 Noel and I turn elsewhere our endeavour
 The spark of life and energy to kindle.
 And if we fail then sadly we shall sever
 Our partnership and watch our efforts dwindle
 Into domestic happiness or horror
 As we surmount or melt into Gomorrah.

Lot's wife! Lot's wife! All women are Lot's wife!
 Turning to gaze back at the conflagration,
 Remembering a napkin or a knife
 Forgotten in removal's perturbation,
 And salt they are, embittering the life
 Of men and children, to the consternation
 Of lovers, poets and the half-baked fry
 Who cannot live and yet are loth to die.

Lot's wife!—But Katje never had turned back,
 And it is time to wind up with a wedding
 Our chronicle of life thrown off its track
 Just when it looked as though young men were heading
 For something nobler than a chimney-stack
 As symbol of their hopes. Now for the shedding
 Of weariness, diffusion and the hateful
 Affairs of State of which we've had our plateful.

If one believed that politicians mattered,
 Then murder were the only argument.
 So much of life must wastefully be scattered,
 So much of wealth be ruinously spent.
 The eager questing mind must be bespattered
 With mud thrown up by greedy merchants bent
 On making money take the place of feeling
 And all that Love is all the time revealing.

Love clearly shows the one great human need
 Of understanding, quiet, sweet, profound.
 Not otherwise, Beloved, are you freed,
 And Freedom's joy grows in no other ground.
 In other soils joy is a noisome weed
 Poisoned with filth by self-love strewn around.
 Tyrant self-love, you raise your bloody hand
 In vain against the Will to Understand!

That will was ne'er so lovelily revealed
 As in sweet Katje, golden from the sun,
 Golden as wheat ripe-nodding in a field
 In Africa, whence came the strength to run
 Warm-blooded through her, that she could not yield
 To Love save in the spirit-chosen one,
 And that one held aloof until the Truth
 Had broken up the follies of his youth.

Young love! Young love, the sweet intoxicant,
 Must lose its youth for such a burning will
 As Golden Katje's, fierce and adamant
 In tender stubbornness to wait until
 Life and her love, together grown, should grant
 A passion deep and clear enough to fill
 Her soul with joy and loveliness and power
 To make secure her birthright and her dower.

Young love's a mountebank, a thief, a cheat
 To filch the riches of the gaping male,
 Yet all his arts are useless when they meet
 A female passion taking up the tale
 Of broken hearts and broken lives that greet
 With bitterness the seeker of the Grail.
 One such as Katje takes into her hands
 The Grail and lives more than she understands.

In vain her lover pleads his weariness,
 His wounds, his anguish and his starving plight.
 She is not his to succour and caress
 But to create her day-break from his night.
 Love's day must dawn! How linger with the less
 And comfortable joys that make delight
 Of Darkness? Day must wait until the soul
 Has made the body and the spirit whole.

There is no need to tell of Katje's doing.
 Being with her grew freely into deeds,
 As earth into the fragrant flowers strewing
 In recklessness of burning Love their seeds.
 Where Katje was there was an end of mewing
 Life's passion up in walls of jealous creeds.
 All that was living at her touch would glow,
 Golden as she, its inmost truth to know.

This golden gleam is beauty's very light.
 Without it is no truth, only decay,
 Whose phosphorescence, shining through the night,
 That wraps this earth, will lure the eyes away
 To weaken them and dim the spirit's sight
 That through them sees the glow of beauty's day.
 All is confusion, twisted and awry.
 When coldly seen through a deluded eye.

Noel remembered most his Katje's hair,
 The helmet of her hair, and her two hands,
 The rest was golden, gold beyond compare,
 Gold such as only fiercest love demands
 To be the token of its precious ware,
 The will that waits until it understands
 Before it moves upon its certain quest,
 Whereto it moulds and models all the rest.

Love in New York! The town where sex is riven,
 Where in their office-buildings men seclude
 Themselves, by the machine of commerce driven,
 And women in their restlessness are mewed
 Until they too are cloistral, parched and shriven
 In an unholy innocence imbued
 With cruelty, that tortures every thought
 Of life beyond what little can be bought!

Love in New York! Yet such is life's fecundity,
 And such the richness of our epic tale,
 And such the humour of its gay profundity,
 'That in these closing stanzas blows a gale
 To take our roving lover and his one ditty
 Of Katje, golden Katje, in full sail:
 For songs, ye lovers, songs of love are ships
 Blown by the praises of a lover's lips.

Love in New York! Where else should love reveal
 His loveliness than there where most is done
 To shut him out? Where men would fain conceal
 Themselves from Love, there surely they will run
 Into Love's arms, His tenderness to feel
 Warmer and kinder than the burning sun.
 Love sooner finds the coward in his coldness
 Than goes to meet the braggart in his boldness.

Noel was lost in tender love's embrace.
 Love held him close and soothed his weariness.
 Love smoothed the harshness from his furrowed face.
 The blood and tears, that made him so much less
 Than man, a creature lost in loss of grace,
 Love wiped away and held him from the press
 And throng of life half-lived, half-loved, half-seen,
 The filth for spawning of the base and mean.

Love in his aching anguish let him feel
 The nearness of his golden beauty, waking
 Before she came, the force himself to heal
 Of all the poisoned hurts that had been breaking
 His heart, to make it iron for the steel
 She'd forge him into in her noble taking.
 All this he knew, all this Love let him know
 Before she came her strength away to throw.

She needed it no more when he had found,
 Sustained by her, Love's meaning and Love's power.
 No need for either any more to sound
 The depths of life now proven in Love's flower.
 For them Life's horror's driven underground
 And with it go the craven souls who cower
 About the frozen present and the past,
 Believing not that Love is first and last.

Love laughs his way through all that men devise
 To shut him out or snare his wingèd feet.
 Love laughs and lights a noble woman's eyes,
 And where they shine most marvellously sweet
 Is life, all thrilling with the young surprise
 Of truth and beauty when at last they meet.
 Ah! When they meet, a vulgar world's no matter,
 More than a nest of angry monkeys' chatter.

This is the world, the meeting of two spirits
 Each in the other tested and remade.
 The single spirit rightfully inherits
 The Hell that age-long selfishness has made.
 That Hell on earth no doubt has certain merits,
 But they are nothing in the writer's trade.
 His is to write of such a world as this
 As Noel found in his beloved's kiss.

"One kiss," said Romeo, and "I'll descend."
 Not so, my Noel, kissing till the soul
 Brought all its love and power without end
 To raise him up to Heaven with the whole
 Of life in hidden harmony to spend
 Its passion in attaining to this goal:
 A power of being that shall gaily dare
 To take in courage as we breathe the air.

O God! One needs such courage now to laugh
 Through all the grim grey torment of these days!
 Yet soldiers know there is no other staff
 Than laughter deep and strong enough to raise
 The heart up for the goblet it must quaff
 Of blood and gall, and weary eyes to gaze
 Upon a scene that must put out their light,
 Were there not Love to save their murdered sight.

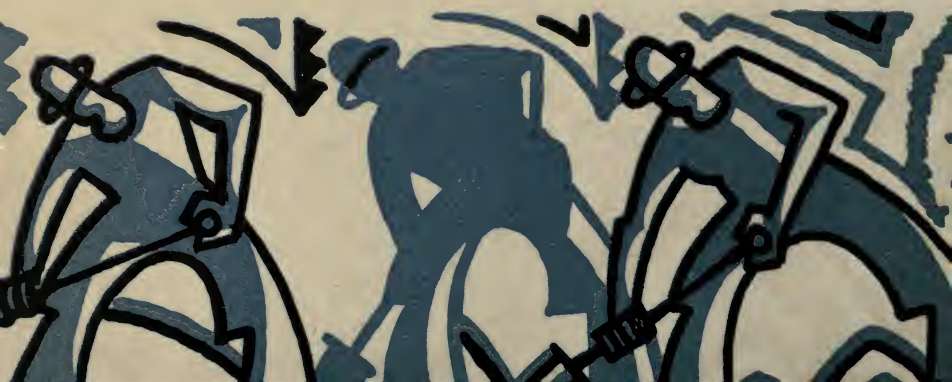
Yet Love can laugh, so sweetly love can raise
 The song of laughter! Sing your happy song,
 Sweet Love, in Noel's and in Katje's praise.
 Lovers attend, and go ye now among
 The broken men and women of these days.
 Heed not their evil, neither right their wrong,
 But sing the song of courage and Love's laughter
 Love, who is Lord, and shall be so hereafter.

“ Die Bank, die silberne Seele der Stadt
 Und die Bücher, wo eingeschrieben
 Jedweden Mannes Banco-Werth,
 Gottlob! sie sind uns geblieben! ”

THE END.

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